A Vanderbilt Miscellany
1919-1944

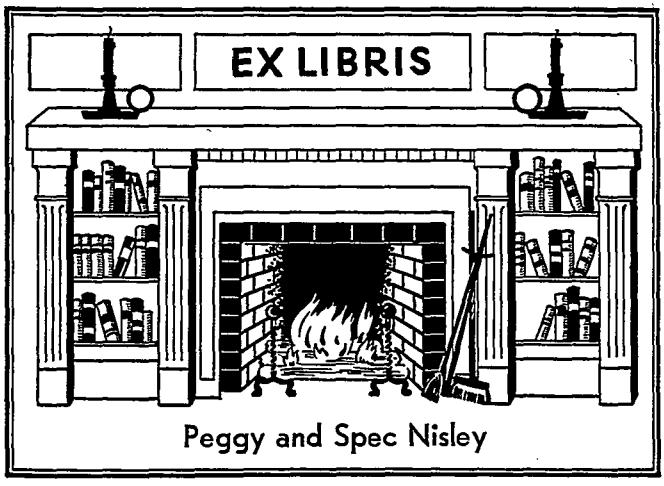


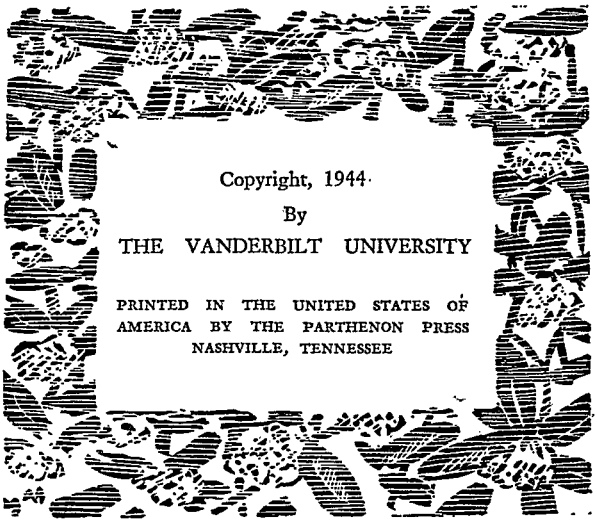
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PREFACE

The preparation and publication of this work has been encouraged by an appropriation by the Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University in response to a suggestion by the Committee on the Vanderbilt University Press. A hearty word of thanks and appreciation is extended to the Board for this aid. It should be made clear, however, that this aid in no way signifies that the selection of the contents of this book is official or has any official endorsement. This work primarily represents the critical judgment of Mr. Beatty, who was chosen by the Press for the task. Major credit should be given Mr. Beatty, who, however, has had valuable assistance, largely informal, from a special committee consisting of Dean Philip Davidson, Dr. W. C. Curry, Dr. Sam Clark, Professor Donald Davidson, Alec B. Stevenson, Dr. H. C. Nixon, and himself.

The various publishers of certain writings reproduced in this collection have been very kind in permitting this use of their copyrighted material. It is pleasant to note that helpful co-operation and support have been given by all Vanderbilt authors who were approached in connection with this work. It should also be stated that an abundance of good writing by Vanderbilt men was painfully omitted, since the plan called for only one volume, not a shelf approximating the dimensions once prescribed by Charles W. Eliot.

H. Clarence Nixon
Chairman of the Committee
on the Vanderbilt University Press

Chairman of the Committee
on *A Vanderbilt Miscellany*



BY WAY OF BACKGROUND

RICHMOND CROOM BEATTY (M.A.'28, Ph.D.'30)

This volume is the result of an effort to bring together illustrations of the literary achievement of Vanderbilt authors since the First World War. During that twenty-five-year interval more books have been written by men who were trained at the University (or who were members of the faculty long enough to become thoroughly identified with its traditions) than anybody I know of has undertaken to count. The problem of emphasis and selection has, as a result, been abnormally strenuous. The only solution which presented itself was to insist upon standards of unqualified excellence, to prefer selections which were primarily creative, and to exclude those alumni whose reputations had become established before 1919. To speak broadly, in other words, we are presenting in these pages our younger generation, although by this date a few of the names in the table of contents have become so familiar and distinguished as to appear decidedly old.

To fail to suggest that the greater part of this literary activity

had its center in the Department of English would be obviously negligent. The head of that department, from 1912 to his retirement in 1942, was Dr. Edwin Mims, and one of the finest things I can think to say about him is to point out the fact that in a day when administrative insistence throughout the country to staff faculties with Doctors of Philosophy was uncomfortably strong, he defied that insistence on two decisive occasions. For Dr. Mims was convinced that the ideal English department is a balanced department—one, that is, in which both creative writing and scholarship are represented. In order to realize this objective he engaged John Crowe Ransom, in 1914, upon his return from Oxford, and Donald Davidson in 1920, before he had received his Master's degree. These men, together with Walter Clyde Curry (a Stanford Ph.D.) and Stanley Johnson, made up his staff when instruction may be said to have returned to normal conditions after the war.

Yet if the English department was the center of this activity, there were other influences which gave it decided enrichment, both within the faculty and in the city itself. No intelligent undergraduate could have sat regularly in the Greek classes of Dean H. C. Tolman (as did Ransom, Davidson, W. Y. Elliott, Tate, and others) without absorbing a sense of the dignity, breeding, and scholarship which everyone who knew him associated with that distinguished gentleman. And there were other representatives of an older tradition—Professors like George Pullen Jackson, the student of music and folklore; Herbert Sanborn, the brilliant lecturer in aesthetics and philosophy; and Walter F. Fleming, one of the pioneer historians devoted to a first-hand examination of Southern history of the reconstruction period. They were, all three, men whose learning and wisdom overflowed the limits of any formal course of study and made association with them an exciting adventure in education. They gave a character to the University which was simply not to be found elsewhere in the region, to my knowledge. Moreover these men and many of their colleagues were almost invariably accessible to students and to each other. Faculty apartments in Kissam and in Wesley Hall accommodated for years

a number of them and thus identified them in an extraordinarily intimate sense with the campus scene.

Beyond the campus were certain citizens of Nashville, like those who had formed the Centennial Club and who were at this time sponsoring discriminating literary programs. Vanderbilt writers addressed this group often. The town and gown tradition was further strengthened by such organizations as the Old Oak Club, the Coffee House Club and the Round Table, in which business men and university members enjoyed many a friendly interchange of ideas. It is significant to recall, if one may anticipate slightly, that when the authors here under discussion began to meet regularly, they met at the home of a Nashville citizen, not on the campus. And they met informally: John Trotwood Moore, the popular Tennessee author, was a guest; Mrs. Mary Boyd Carpenter invited the entire group and certain students to her home. Eminent doctors and lawyers attended other sessions; and there were occasionally rather famous writers from the outside—"A. E." (George William Russell), Louis Untermeyer, Henry S. Canby, and Robert Frost, to name only a few.

The four younger members of the English department comprised the nucleus of the group which soon developed a serious and consistent interest in creative writing. They began to assemble, in the fall in 1921, at the home of Mr. James M. Frank. A short while later they were bringing their poems with them. Carbon copies would be passed around to everyone present, and they would be read and criticized, often at great length. Certain undergraduates were invited to join the company, then a few alumni, and by the winter of 1921-22 it became evident that here was talent enough to form a magazine of verse and to keep it filled, if necessary, with their own productions. *The Fugitive* made its first appearance in April, 1922.

To study the files of that publication is still a highly rewarding experience. The accent of quality and enthusiasm is evident in each of the four bound volumes. Between that spring and December, 1925, nineteen numbers were published, numbers entirely free

of commercial advertising. It began as a bi-monthly but became a quarterly shortly afterward and then, permanently, in 1925, the editors explaining that on this more leisurely basis greater time could be "devoted to writing poetry and less to mechanical problems." This last phrase suggests the real reason for its demise. Publication was suspended because there was no available editor to take over the necessary administrative duties: too many of the original members were too busy with their own creative writing to spare the time for it. As Allen Tate remarked years later, it was probably one of the few little magazines in America to be discontinued for other than financial reasons.

The earliest numbers were edited by a board composed of the entire group. These men were Curry, Davidson, Ransom, and Johnson, of the Vanderbilt English department; Allen Tate and Merrill Moore, undergraduates in the University; Elliott and William Frierson, both former graduates and at this time Rhodes Scholars at Oxford; and James M. Frank, Alec B. Stevenson, and Sidney Mttron Hirsch, of Nashville. Jesse and Ridley Wills, Robert Penn Warren, Alfred Starr, and Laura Riding were subsequently made members. With the exception of Laura Riding (who incidentally never participated in the meetings) they were all Vanderbilt students or graduates. It is necessary to add, however, that the magazine never had any formal or official or financial connection with the University, whose administration was preoccupied with a building program attendant upon expansion in the social sciences and the Medical School. The founders of this venture in poetry, rather, had come to writing by way of friendship and discussion, the way of the amateur society, as had the French Symbolists and certain English and Irish poets thirty years before.

Curiosity regarding its name developed early. Fugitives? What were the poets fleeing from? A foreword to the first number should have given a clue: "*The Fugitive* flees from nothing faster than the high-caste Brahmins of the Old South." The notice went on to imply that the mint julep, white-columned variety of Southern literature had expired, an amiable eventuality which made its own

emergence possible. Donald Davidson elaborated the point in a letter to Corra Harris of the Charlotte *News and Observer:* "If there is a significance in the title of the magazine, it lies perhaps in the sentiment of the editors (on this point I am sure we all agree) to flee from the extreme of conventionalism whether old or new. They hope to keep in touch with and to utilize in their work the best qualities of modern poetry, without at the same time casting aside as unworthy all that is established as good in the past."

The personal literary intentions of these men were simple enough. Writing in the first two numbers under such pseudonyms as Robin Gallivant, Henry Feathertop, Roger Prim, and the like, they merely wished to record the latest verses of a fellowship of authors "who have for several years been in the habit of assembling to swap poetical wages and to elaborate the Ars Poetica. These poets acknowledge no trammels upon the independence of their thought, they are not overpoweringly academic, they are in tune with the times in the fact that to a large degree they are self-convicted experimentalists. . . . The procedure of publication is simply to gather up the poems that rank the highest, by general consent of the group, and take them down to the publisher." The informality of this arrangement has become, I suspect unconsciously, a tradition among Vanderbilt writers. People still turn up on the campus with pieces they have written—essays, poems, short stories, scholarly articles, novels, biographies—and almost anybody who happens to be accessible at the moment may be asked to read them and tear them apart.

Announcement that publication of the *Fugitive* was being discontinued was appended to the December number of 1925. Subscriptions and help from certain friendly patrons had enabled the group to achieve a comfortable financial condition, even a surplus. Moreover, the statement insisted, the Fugitives were in no sense bankrupt in literary energy, despite their prodigal expenditures during recent years. For it should be remembered that though certain prize poems by outsiders had been printed—and occasional contributions from authors like Hart Crane, Robert Graves, John

Gould Fletcher, L. A. G. Strong, William Alexander Percy, Louis Untermeyer, and Witter Bynner—the pages had in general been filled with selections from their own work. A stage had simply been reached at length in which that work would have to be seriously curtailed, or an exciting editorial experiment abandoned.

Meanwhile how had it been received, by critics and readers? The answer is that among those who were alert to newer tendencies the response was enthusiastic, as more than a hundred extant newspaper reviews and periodical notices testify. William Stanley Braithwaite reprinted seventeen of the poems in his anthology for 1923. Dr. Mims, "the only member of the English department who is not a poet"—his own remark—lectured approvingly on the subject before Nashville literary clubs. The Greensboro, North Carolina, *Daily News* framed its comments in terms of a comparison with the *Southern Literary Magazine,* of Atlanta, a publication whose announced intentions represented virtually everything the Fugitives contemned. Purporting to be a "high class literary paper," it appealed to "every patriotic man and woman of the South to do their part" in assuring the success of the magazine. The *Fugitive,* by contrast, the notice went on, represented a serious and intelligent effort in a region barren of little magazines of distinction, if one excepted the New Orleans *Double Dealer.* The present files contain, in fact, only two statements of dissatisfaction. One correspondent suggested that if the character of the verses did not change, the Fugitives might soon become Fugitives from justice! Another, who had paid his dollar in advance, declared after reading his first copy that he was disappointed and rather felt it incumbent upon the editors to refund seventy-five cents of that sum.

On the other hand, Hervey Allen wrote from Charleston in enthusiastic praise. "A little more fighting by the present generation and the old sentimental ghosts will be pretty well laid or confined to their natural habitat, the country churchyard." The Association of Nashville Retailers offered an annual prize of $100 for the best poem submitted by an outsider who was not yet the author of a volume. Ward-Belmont School, through the friendliness of its

president, the late Dr. J. D. Blanton, added another award of half that amount for the best poem submitted by an undergraduate. Meanwhile, from Oxford, Elliott and Frierson wrote frequently, commenting in detail upon the pieces being printed in successive issues and enclosing poems of their own. The complete candor of their letters throughout attests the healthy critical atmosphere in which members of the group went about their work. And on very rare occasions there came a letter like the following from another of the original membership who had moved to New York:

The Editors of the Fuxitive
(We are informed that they be J. Crowe Ransom and R. Penn Warren)
Dear Sirs or Mesdames:

Having heard considerable tell of your journal of verse on this very day from good bad and undifferentiated people, and having been impressed its exquisite voice crying as they say in the wilderness by it the same, I am herewith moved to offer my meek infractions upon the muse to your earnest consideration.

It is seldom that my infractions—as it were, assaults—upon this ancient and somewhat forgotten lady are so meek, and therefore I may with no unseemly virtue take unto myself the pride of humility. You cannot be so heartless, Sirs or Mesdames, as to read my at once atrabilious and empyrean offerings in the spirit of contumely. . . .

Hoping for a favorable reply, and wishing your magazine the undoubted social success it dubiously deserves, I am, and at the same time urging you to return MSS in the unenclosed envelope in the event of impossible rejection, with best-wishes

Yours very truly,
Allen Tate

It was not always drudgery in the Fugitive offices, which incidentally never existed!

The faculty influence which gave focus to the literary interests of these Vanderbilt authors stemmed primarily, before 1937, from John Crowe Ransom's writing courses. Since that time, when Ransom left to edit the *Kenyon Review,* the tradition has been vigorously continued by Donald Davidson, who has taken over the entire responsibility for advanced instruction in composition. During his

five years as a member of the English department John Donald Wade also got under way a Seminar in American Literature and directed four dissertations which were later published—biographies of William Byrd, Fanny Kemble, Hugh Swinton Legare, and Charles Egbert Craddock. Wade also wrote his own brilliant *John Wesley,* at this time, but his hands were in large measure tied by the requirement that his students work for advanced degrees.



The first volume to stem from a group of Ransom's students was *Driftwood Flames,* copyrighted in 1923 by "The Poetry Guild." Thirteen undergraduates—Charles Moss, John Abbott, Sol Stevenson, Robert Penn Warren, J. Comfort, W. C. Cobb, Warren Taylor, W. T. Bandy, Andrew Lytle, H. R. Wilks, Franklin Ray, Richard West, and D. T. Ridgeway—contributed to this publication, which seems to have been inspired as a protest against too much political activity on the part of the Calumet Club, the Vanderbilt Chapter of Sigma Upsilon. These men felt that personal favoritism had re-

placed merit in the naming of members to that literary organization, and the fact that during the three previous years it had sponsored the trivial and slightly disreputable humor magazine *Jade* would tend to justify their rebellion. At all events *Driftwood Flames* was favorably noticed, the reviewer for the New York *Post* expressing a doubt that students in any other university "could match this little volume for quality of poetic talent."

By the time *Fugitives: An Anthology* was published, in 1928, certain members of the original group had achieved national recognition in their own right. Not only had dozens of their poems been reprinted in the most widely read collections; seven of the number had become authors of books. Ransom had brought out *Chills and Fever, Grace Before Meat,* and *Two Gentlemen in Bonds.* Davidson was now known as the author of *An Outland Piper* and *The Tall Men,* Laura Riding had published *The Close Chaplet* and *Voltaire,* Stanley Johnson, *Professor,* Ridley Wills, *Hoax* and *Harvey Landrum,* and there had been two important critical studies—William Frierson's *The Influence of French Naturalism on the English Novel* and Walter Clyde Curry's *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences.* It was only natural, therefore, that the anthology should attract serious critical attention, especially in view of the fact that by this date five of the original group—Ransom, Davidson, Tate, Warren, and Moore—were also represented in the standard index to contemporary verse, Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry.*

Meanwhile another generation of Ransom's students had collected material for a second undergraduate volume. *Facets* appeared in the spring of 1928, under the sponsorship of a reformed Calumet Club. The book differed from *Driftwood Flames* primarily in that it included poems by four co-eds: Clarice Dix, Margaret Moore, Elizabeth Harris, and Elizabeth Matthews. Once again the reviewers were strong in their praise of the quality of student achievement at Vanderbilt, especially as reflected in the offerings of men like Cleanth Brooks, William Davidson, Hugh Cecil, Paul Gaunt, and Henry B. Kline. Rereading *Facets* in the light of a sixteen-year perspective, one is struck by the fact that most of the poems are

free from the subjective exploitation of personalities, are equally free from the sentimental. They still wear well.

At this same period plans of a much more ambitious nature were being matured by a few members of the Fugitive group, with the assistance of certain friends who were historians, political scientists, and students of philosophy. These men were becoming profoundly concerned with the dominant cultural presuppositions of American life and in particular with the relation of the South to those presuppositions. It is important to realize that this interest, which received national attention later as the Agrarian Movement, was in no sense directly related to the Fugitive enterprise. Of the sixteen Fugitives, only four—Ransom, Davidson, Tate, and Warren—were represented in the symposium *I'll Take My Stand.* The remaining twelve were either hostile or indifferent to the entire program, or too preoccupied to do more than follow its development privately.

Their places were taken by the following eight Southerners: Lyle Lanier, Frank L. Owsley, and John Donald Wade, of the Vanderbilt faculty; Henry B. Kline, a graduate student; Andrew Lytle, H. C. Nixon, John Gould Fletcher, and Stark Young. These comprised the twelve contributors to the volume, which appeared in the fall of 1930.

The statement of principles which introduced *I'll Take My Stand* may be found elsewhere in these pages. This, together with the accompanying essays, precipitated more widespread controversy, I believe, than has attended any Southern book ever printed. Copies of editorials, newspaper articles, essays, and letters-of-protest-to-the-publisher may be said virtually to have deluged the authors. From Chicago they descended, from New York and Boston, from Richmond, Chattanooga, Chapel Hill, Dallas, Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery—from almost every locality in which the symposium came to be known about. For it was simply not the kind of document which a person seriously interested in the nature of a capitalistic economy could examine, without profound misgivings. The statement of William S. Knickerbocker, editor of the *Sewanee Review* and a bitter if often incoherent critic of the group, may be

mentioned as typical. He termed it "the most audacious book ever written by Southerners . . . the most challenging book published in America since Henry George's *Progress and Poverty.*"

H. L. Mencken assailed it in his *American Mercury,* and later a second time in the *Virginia Quarterly Review.* He could see much that was wrong with the South, but not much beyond the implications of the anti-evolution law that had resulted in the Dayton Trial or the fact that citizens of Mississippi did not subscribe, gang fashion, to his magazine—a fact which made them, practically by definition, the most illiterate and barbarous Americans of modern times. "So did Canute" was the caption given the lengthy diatribe in the *Nation,* meaning that, according to Henry Hazlitt, the Agrarians would be no more successful than had that fabulous king in stemming the tide of Progress—a tide of Progress, he neglected to confess, which had just succeeded in sprawling the country into the grimiest depression of its history. Gerald W. Johnson attacked their program with a ponderous article in *Harpers* magazine. Howard Mumford Jones disparaged it before a large audience in Dallas, Texas. The fight was on, was on in earnest, for the issue soon became distilled in terms of a central and shocking awareness: either the Nashville Agrarians must be discredited, or the always fluent pronouncements of the Joneses and the Knickerbockers and the Johnsons and the Menckens on the state of the world had missed the point. The nineteenth century philosophy of industrial Progress had collapsed before their eyes in the general debacle of 1929, and they had failed to understand what had happened; they were still too stunned to know what had hit them. Thus they fought the ideas of these startling reactionaries (who were after all criticizing not traditional America but, immediately, the America of acquisitive politics and high finance of the nineteen twenties) consistently, shrewdly, and with effect, particularly in certain influential publications which were dedicated to their own point of view. The Agrarians were Neo-Confederates, so ran their charges, were Poets, Fugitives, Escapists, "sufferers from nostalgic vapors," romanticists unwilling to face the realities of modern life. Most

astonishing of all, they were college Professors, some of them teaching in a university founded by a Yankee plutocrat, were men who wanted to turn back the clock, revive the horse and buggy age, who would have every man go out and juice a cow. It was a clever attack, and in two respects it was successful: For *I'll Take My Stand,* according to one of its contributors, came to be more thoroughly denounced and misapprehended by more people who never read it than any other volume in American literature. Again, though the first edition was exhausted relatively soon, its publishers never saw fit to issue a second.

I am inclined to think that the most intelligent attention the ideas advanced in the book received was in connection with certain public debates which followed its appearance in print. No one can estimate the influence of these exchanges of opinion, all of which were held upon serious, widely advertised, and enthusiastically applauded occasions. Thirty-five hundred people, for example—a capacity audience—listened for well over two hours in Richmond, Virginia, while Ransom and Stringfellow Barr debated the issue: Agrarianism versus Industrialism. If front-page streamers and follow-up editorials are indicative of public interest, this event was historically important, for the Southern tradition of oral discussion was at last being auspiciously revived before alert audiences in the section. Other debates followed—between Ransom and William D. Anderson, in Atlanta; between Davidson and Knickerbocker, in Columbia, Tennessee; between Ransom and Knickerbocker, in New Orleans; and between Ransom and Barr, in Chattanooga. It was a unique situation in our recent social history.

The ideas of a number of the original twelve and of certain younger followers who had been attracted to their point of view received further extensive elaboration in the *American Review.* This magazine, a successor to the *Bookman,* was founded in 1933 by Seward Collins, who announced in his first number that the Agrarians, along with such English Distributists as G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, were thinkers to whose ideas he wished principally to devote space. During the four years of its existence scarcely

an issue appeared in which one or more Vanderbilt faculty members or former students were not represented by essays and critical reviews.

The *American Review* proved important in another sense. It led indirectly to the publication, in 1936, of a second symposium to which a number of distributists and American Catholics interested in land reform contributed. These writers had, virtually all of them, previously appeared more than once in the pages of the *American Review,* and since, of the twenty-one, thirteen were identified with Vanderbilt—either as faculty members or former students—some mention of their work is imperative. The Statement of Principles which was drawn up in Nashville in June, 1936, following the publication of *Who Owns America,* was widely circulated; but a passage from the introduction to the book is what is important here. Herbert Agar and Allen Tate were its editors:

> When the social and economic system is on the rocks, those who try to build a better world should make a picture, in human terms, of what they want the world to be. This picture is more important than any Reform Bill. If the reformation is to endure, it must be based on sound political and economic theory; but if a reformation is even to begin, it must be based on an ideal that can stir the human heart.
>
> No country can be reformed by the people who hate it—a fact which our left-wing intellectuals tend to miss. The haters can supply useful criticism; they can show the frauds and injustices which corrode society. They can even persuade men to overthrow a world which has grown sick with injustice. But only those who have affection for the national ideal can persuade a people to reform.
>
> It is our belief that the American ideal is still one of the best acts of man's imagination. It is our belief that the plain man throughout America is still moved by this ideal as by no other promise.

The Vanderbilt men who were identified with this remarkable document were Lyle Lanier, Frank Owsley, Richard B. Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, James M. Waller, George Marion O'Donnell, John Crowe Ransom, Andrew Lytle, John Wade, Robert Penn Warren, Henry Clay Evans, Jr., and Cleanth Brooks.

They were all present at the general meeting in June which included "27 persons from ten different states," a meeting called in Nashville "to determine whether it would be a worthy public service to organize and publicize certain opinions upon which the members of the conference were agreed." The assembly did agree that periodic publication of their views was advisable; but a satisfactory magazine dedicated to this purpose failed to materialize.

How can one assess, even in most general terms, the influence which these men exercised, not only upon one another but by indirection and, as it were, in widening circles, upon the world? It must be remembered, to begin with, that though their geographic center was in a sense relatively fixed, they were in no sense isolated from intellectual currents moving in regions far removed from Nashville. The files of their correspondence contain several letters from Frierson and Elliott from Oxford, as has already been mentioned. Later Tate was writing in detail from New York and, later still, from France. Laura Riding wrote from Egypt and Austria. Fletcher wrote from England. H. C. Nixon wrote frequently from New Orleans; Elliott, again, from California, where he had gone to teach after his return to this country. Then Warren began to write from Memphis, as he had written formerly as a graduate student from the west coast, from Oxford, or from his Kentucky home. And what were they all writing about? Simply this: they were writing (as many of Davidson's soldier-students are doing today) about those matters which concerned them most as serious students of literature and of human life—and as experimental artists. I cannot think of it as in any sense an accident, for example, that Brooks and Warren edited the *Southern Review* during the seven years—1935-42—in which it became the most distinguished critical quarterly in the English language; that Ransom founded and has for six years edited the *Kenyon Review,* which no serious follower of the arts can ignore; and that within one year (1942-3) Lytle transformed the old and once distinguished *Sewanee Review* from the condition into which it had sunk for more than a decade —a haphazard receptacle of second-rate academic-literary exercises

—into a publication with character and difficult standards of excellence, standards which will certainly be maintained under the forthcoming editorship of Tate.

And how was it, moreover, that Warren, Tate, and Lytle appeared a good many years afterwards with novels, and that many others attempted the form with varying successes? I do not with certainty know. But I can suggest that anybody seriously interested in the question study the work of these men in its earlier form. Such a student, I think, will find in it a fundamental point of view about human nature and the relation of man to society, a point of view which has been consistently maintained and strengthened by long intercommunication and which demanded only a subject matter and a technical skill to find its proper expression. And was that elaborate and valuable symposium *Culture in the South* the result of unmotivated accident? There are a good many people who think otherwise, who are convinced that its publication was, at least indirectly, the outgrowth of a necessity which a large number of Southern thinkers discovered, after *I'll Take My Stand* appeared, of defining their positions. These matters are incidental to the present survey, of course, but that they are unmistakably related to it will be apparent to anybody interested in intellectual influences.

Two student literary periodicals made their appearance during the nineteen thirties, and they deserve mention in any account of Vanderbilt writers. The *Three Bishops* was edited by Mr. Ransom's students in Advanced Composition—more specifically by J. Lacey Reynolds, Miriam Benkovitz, Walter Sharp, Walter Paschall, and W. R. Moses. Although it ran for only a year, it showed definite promise and independence, marred perhaps by a certain facile cleverness. *Pursuit,* a quarterly of prose and verse, was a decidedly more handsome affair. It flourished during the two years, 1938-39, and its enterprising editorial staff under the leadership of William K. Jordan was fortunate, as the Fugitives had been, in winning over the support of such alumni friends as Hill Turner, Jesse Wills, R. M. Estes, Charles Ackers, Thomas N. Merriam, Jordan Monk, Judge A. B. Williams, and Bishop Paul B. Kern.

Pursuit was distinguished in still another way. It published the work of certain guest contributors from several institutions in the region, and it also featured pieces by talented graduate students on the campus. There were likewise a few notes by faculty members. Among the undergraduates whose poems and essays remain interesting reading are Bernard Breyer, Dan Ross, Charlotte Williams, Partee Fleming, Jesse Clay Orr, J. E. Covey, Edward McGehee, and Mary Davidson. It is regrettable that an appropriation from the Student Activity Fund could not have been made for the purpose of keeping this unusual experiment alive.

I have attempted to suggest, if sketchily, the nature of the two general literary and critical movements that have been identified with Vanderbilt since the First World War. The account has taken no cognizance at all of the vigorous eddies of individual activity that swirled almost constantly about the fringes of these movements and that were certainly—if in no definable way—related to them. There was Davidson's book page for instance—*The Weekly Review: A Page about Books*—which ran for six years (1924-30) in the Nashville *Tennessean,* for the last three years of that period in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* and the Knoxville *Journal* as well, and which for freshness of approach and for its sound critical evaluations made similar review organs in the Northeast seem embarrassingly thin and directionless. There were novelists like Brainard Cheney, whose formal connection with the University was slight and whose interest in serious writing flowered out long afterwards, but who confesses to an abiding stimulus first awakened by talking and studying with Mrs. Tate and Warren. The same comment goes for Jack Boone, Mildred Haun, for the irrepressible Jesse Stuart, and for Randall Jarrell, George Marion O'Donnell, James Still, Edd Winfield Parks, and Blake Clark. Something was in the air, in short, which no sensitive young person could escape, whether it provoked in him rebelliousness or devoted sympathy. At all events I must be permitted to confess that when I came to attend classes in a forbiddingly new Calhoun Hall, in the

late 1920's, and found Dr. Mims on one side of the third floor, busily working at his *Adventurous America,* while ranged along the opposite side Davidson was doing his book page and writing essays and poems, Ransom was completing *God without Thunder,* Wade was completing *John Wesley,* and Walter Clyde Curry was continuing his revolutionary studies in Chaucer, it seemed that a new world was exploding in my face. One simply had to get started with a book of his own in order to hold up his head in such company!

To a remarkable extent this tradition remains. I have noticed, for instance, that the latest generation of students studies the writings of Ransom, Tate, Warren, and Davidson with unusual care. Some have been known to criticize them all, at times with a vigorous independence. This is entirely as it should be. It is the best evidence I can cite of the fact that the basic impetus which brought forth the *Fugitive* and *I'll Take My Stand* is still lustily alive at Vanderbilt and that we shall hear from that impetus significantly after the war.



NARRATIVE

WHEN THE LIGHT GETS GREEN

ROBERT PENN WARREN (B.A.'25)

MY grandfather had a long white beard and sat under the cedar tree. The beard, as a matter of fact, was not very long and not white, only grey, but when I was a child and was away from him at school during the winter, I would think of him, not seeing him in my mind's eye, and say, he has a long white beard. Therefore it was a shock to me, on the first morning back home, to watch him lean over the dresser toward the wavy green mirror, which in his always shadowy room reflected things like deep water riffled by a little wind, and clip his grey beard to a point. It is grey and pointed, I would say then, remembering what I had thought before.

He turned his face to the green wavy glass, first one side and then the other in quarter profile, and lifted the long shears, which trembled a little, up to cut the beard. His face being turned like that, with his good nose and pointed grey beard, he looked like General Robert E. Lee without any white horse to ride. My grandfather had been a soldier too, but now he wore blue jean pants and when he leaned over like that toward the mirror I couldn't help but notice how small his hips and backsides were. Only they weren't just small, they were shrunken. I noticed how the blue jean hung loose from his suspenders and loose off his legs and down around his shoes. And in the morning when I noticed all this about his legs and backsides, I felt a tight feeling in my stomach like when you walk behind a woman and see the high heel of her shoe is worn and twisted and jerks her ankle every time she takes a step.

Always before my grandfather had finished clipping his beard, my Uncle Kirby came to the door and beat on it for breakfast. "I'll be down in just a minute, thank you sir," my grandfather said. My uncle called him Mr. Barden. "Mr. Barden, breakfast is ready." It was because my Uncle Kirby was not my real uncle, having married my Aunt Lucy, who lived with my grandfather. Then my

grandfather put on a black vest and put his gold watch and chain in the vest and picked up his cob pipe from the marble dresser top, and he and I went down to breakfast, after Uncle Kirby was already downstairs.

When we came into the dining room, Aunt Lucy was sitting at the foot of the table with the iron coffee pot on a plate beside her. She said, "Good morning, Papa."

"Good morning, Lucy," he said, and sat down at the head of the table, taking one more big puff off his pipe before laying it beside his plate.

"You've brought that old pipe down to breakfast again," my aunt said, while she poured the bright-looking coffee into the cups.

"Don't it stink," he always said. . . .

After we ate, my uncle got up, and said, "I got to get going," and went out through the kitchen where the cook was knocking and sloshing around. If it had rained right and was a good tobacco setting season, my grandfather went off with me down to the stable to get his mare, for he had to see the setting. We saddled up the mare and went across the lot, where limestone bunched out of the ground and cedar trees and blue grass grew out of the split rock. A branch of cold water with minnows in it went through the lot between the rocks and under the cedar trees; it was where I used to play before I got big enough to go to the river with the niggers to swim.

My grandfather rode across the lot and over the rise back of the house. He sat up pretty straight for an old man, holding the bridle in his left hand, and in his right hand a long hickory tobacco stick whittled down to make a walking cane. I walked behind him, and watched the big straw hat he wore waggle a little above his narrow neck, or how he held the sick in the middle, firm and straight up like something carried in a parade, or how smooth and slow the muscles in the mare's flanks worked as she put each hoof down on the ground going up the hill. Sassafras bushes and blackberry bushes grew thick along the land over the rise. In summer tufts of hay would catch and hang on the dry bushes, and showed that

the hay wagons had been that way; but when we went that way in setting time, just after breakfast, the blackberry blooms were hardly gone, only a few rusty patches of white left, and the sassafras leaves showed still wet with dew or maybe the rain.

From the rise we could look back on the house. The shingles were black with damp, and the whitewash greyish, except in spots where the sun already struck it and it was drying. The tops of the cedar trees, too, were below us, very dark green and quiet. When we crossed the rise, there were the fields going down toward the river, all checked off and ready for setting, very even, only for the gullies where brush was piled to stop the washing. The fields were reddish from the wet, not yet steaming. Across them, the green woods and the sycamores showing white far off told where the river was.

The hands were standing at the edge of the field under the trees when we got there. The little niggers were filling their baskets with the wet plants to drop, and I got me a basket and filled it. My Uncle Kirby gave me fifty cents for dropping plants, but he didn't give the little niggers that much, I remember. The hands and the women stood around waiting a minute, watching Uncle Kirby, who always fumed around, waving his dibble, his blue shirt already sticking to his arms with sweat.

Then, of a sudden, they all moved out into the field, scattering out down the rows, the droppers first, and after a minute the setters, who lurched along, never straightening up, down the rows toward the river. I walked down my row, separating out the plants and dropping them at the hills, while it got hotter and the ground steamed. The sun broke out now and then, making my shadow on the ground, then the cloud would come again, and I could see its shadow on the red field drifting at me.

My grandfather rode very slow along the edge of the field to watch the setting, or stayed still under the trees. After a while, maybe about ten o'clock, he would leave and go home. I could see him riding the mare up the rise and then go over the rise; or if I was working the other way toward the river, when I turned round

at the end, the lane would be empty and nothing on top the rise, with the cloudy blue-grey sky low behind it.

The tobacco was all he cared about, now we didn't have any horses that were any real good. He had some silver cups, only one real silver one though, that his horses won at fairs, but all that was before I was born. The real silver one, the one he kept on his dresser and kept string and old minie balls and pins and things in, had 1859 on it because his horse won it then before the war, when he was a young man. Uncle Kirby said horses were foolishness, and my grandfather said, yes, he reckoned horses were foolishness all right. So what he cared about now was the tobacco. One time he was a tobacco buyer for three years, but after he bought a lot of tobacco and had it in his sheds, the sheds burned up on him. He didn't have enough insurance to do any good and he was a ruined man. After that all his children, he had all girls and his money was gone, said about him, "Papa's just visionary, he tried to be a tobacco buyer but he's too visionary and not practical." Now he was old the corn could get the rust or the hay get rained on for all he cared, it was Uncle Kirby's worry, but all summer off and on he had to go down to the tobacco field to watch them sucker or plow or worm, and sometimes he pulled a few suckers himself. And when a cloud would blow up black in summer, he got nervous as a cat, not knowing whether it was the rain they needed or maybe a hailstorm coming that would cut the tobacco up bad.

Mornings he didn't go down to the field he went out under the cedar tree where his chair was. Most of the time he took a book with him along with his pipe, for he was an inveterate reader. His being an inveterate reader was one of the things made his children say he was visionary. He read a lot until his eyes went bad the summer before he had his stroke, then after that I read to him some, but not as much as I ought. He used to read out loud some from Macaulay's *History of England* or Gibbon's *Decline and Fall:* about Flodden Field or about how the Janizaries took Constantinople amid great slaughter and how the Turk surveyed the carnage and quoted from the Persian poet about the lizard keeping the courts

of the mighty. My grandfather knew some poetry too, and he said it to himself when he didn't have anything else to do. I lay on my back on the ground, feeling the grass cool and tickly on the back of my neck, and looked upsidedown into the cedar tree where the limbs were tangled and black-green like big hairy fern fronds with the sky blue all around, while he said some poetry. Like the "Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung"; or like, "Roll on thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll."

But he never read poetry, he just said what he already knew. He only read history and *Napoleon and His Marshals,* having been a soldier and fought in the war himself. He rode off and joined the cavalry, but he never told me whether he took the horse that won the real silver cup or not. He was with Forrest before Forrest was a general. He said Forrest was a great general, and if they had done what Forrest wanted and cleaned the country ahead of the Yankees, like the Russians beat Napoleon, they'd whipped the Yankees sure. He told me about Donelson, how they fought in the winter woods, and how they got away with Forrest at night, splashing through the cold water. And how the dead men looked in the river bottoms in winter, and I lay on my back on the grass, looking up in the thick cedar limbs, and thought how it was to be dead.

After Shiloh was fought and they pushed the Yankees down in the river, my grandfather was a captain, for he raised a cavalry company of his own out of West Tennessee. He was a captain, but he never got promoted after the war; when I was a little boy everybody still called him Captain Barden, though they called lots of other people in our section Colonel and Major. One time I said to him: "Grandpa, did you ever kill any Yankees?" He said: "God-er-mighty, how do I know?" So, being little, I thought he was just a captain because he never killed anybody; and I was ashamed. He talked about Fort Pillow, and the drunk niggers under the bluff. And one time he said niggers couldn't stand a charge or stand the cold steel, so I thought maybe he killed some of them. But then I thought, niggers don't count, maybe.

He only talked much in the morning. Almost every afternoon right after dinner, he went to sleep in his chair, with his hands curled up in his lap, one of them holding the pipe that still sent up a little smoke in the shadow, and his head propped back on the tree trunk. His mouth hung open, and under the hairs of his mustache, all yellow with nicotine, you could see his black teeth and his lips that were wet and pink like a baby's. Usually I remember him that way, asleep.

I remember him that way, or else trampling up and down the front porch, nervous as a cat, while a cloud blew up and the trees began to rustle. He tapped his walking cane on the boards and whistled through his teeth with his breath and kept looking off at the sky where the cloud and sometimes the lightning was. Then of a sudden it came, and if it was rain he used to go up to his room and lie down; but if it came hail on the tobacco, he stayed on the front porch, not trampling any more, and watched the hail rattle off the roof and bounce soft on the grass. "God-er-mighty," he always said, "bigger'n minie balls"; even when it wasn't so big.

In 1914, just before the war began, it was a hot summer with the tobacco mighty good but needing rain. And when the dry spell broke and a cloud blew up, my grandfather came out on the front porch, watching it like that. It was mighty still, with lightning way off, so far you couldn't hardly hear the thunder. Then the leaves began to ruffle like they do when the light gets green, and my grandfather said to me, "Son, it's gonna hail." And he stood still. Down in the pasture, little that far off, you could see the cattle bunching up and the white horse charging across the pasture, looking bright, for the sun was shining bright before the cloud struck it all at once. "It's gonna hail," my grandfather said. It was dark, with jagged lightning and the thunder high and steady. And there the hail was.

He just turned around and went in the house. I watched the hail bouncing, then I heard a noise and my aunt yelled. I ran back in the dining room where the noise was, and my grandfather was lying on the floor with the old silver pitcher he dropped and dented

and the glass he had started to drink out of broken. We tried to drag him, but he was too heavy, then my Uncle Kirby came up wet from the stable, so we carried my grandfather upstairs and put him on his bed. My aunt tried to call the doctor even if the lightning might hit the telephone. I stayed back in the dining room and picked up the broken glass and the pitcher and wiped up the floor with a rag. After a while Dr. Blake came from town, then he went away.



When Dr. Blake was gone I went upstairs to see my grandfather. I shut the door and went in his room, which was almost dark, like always, and quiet because the hail didn't beat on the roof any more. He was lying on his back in the featherbed, with a sheet pulled up over him, lying there in the dark. He had his hands curled loose on his stomach, like when he went to sleep in his chair holding the pipe. I sat on a split-bottom chair by the bed and looked at him; he had his eyes shut and his mouth hung loose, but you couldn't hear his breathing. Then I quit looking at him and looked round the room, my eyes getting used to the shadow. I could see his pants on the floor, and the silver cup on the dresser by the mirror, which was green and wavy like water.

When he said something I almost jumped out of my skin, hearing

his voice like that. He said: "Son, I'm gonna die." I tried to say something, but I couldn't. And he waited, then he said: "I'm on borrowed time, it's time to die." I said "No!" so sudden and loud I jumped. He waited a long time and said: "It's time to die. Nobody loves me." I tried to say, "Grandpa, I love you." And then I did say it all right, feeling like it hadn't been me said it, and knowing all of a sudden it was a lie, because I didn't feel anything. He just lay there; and I went downstairs.

It was sunshiny in the yard, the clouds gone, but the grass was wet. I walked down toward the gate, rubbing my bare feet over the slick cold grass. A hen was in the yard and she kept trying to peck up a piece of hail, like a fool chicken will do after it hails; but every time she pecked, it bounced away from her over the green grass. I leaned against the gate, noticing the ground on one side the posts close up was still dry and dusty. I wondered if the tobacco was cut up bad, because Uncle Kirby had gone to see. And while I looked through the gate down across the pasture where everything in the sun was green and shiny with wet and the cattle grazed, I thought about my grandfather, not feeling anything. But I said out loud anyway: "Grandpa, I love you."

My grandfather lived four more years. The year after his stroke they sold the farm and moved away, so I didn't stay with them any more. My grandfather died in 1918, just before the news came my Uncle Kirby was killed in France, and my aunt had to go to work in a store. I got the letter about my grandfather, who died of flu, but I thought about four years back, and it didn't matter much.

MISTER McGREGOR

ANDREW NELSON LYTLE (B.A.'25)

"I want to speak to Mister McGregor."

Yes, sir, that's what he said. Not marster, but MISTER McGREGOR. If I live to be a hundred, and I don't think I will, account of my kidneys, I'll never forget the feelen that come over the room when he said them two words: Mister McGregor. The air shivered into a cold jelly; and all of us, me, ma, and pa, sort of froze in it. I remember thinken how much we favored one of them waxwork figures Sis Lou had learnt to make at Doctor Price's Female Academy. There I was, a little shaver of eight, standen by the window a-blowen my breath on it so's I could draw my name, like chillun'll do when they're kept to the house with a cold. The knock come sudden and sharp, I remember, as I was crossen a T. My heart flopped down in my belly and commenced to flutter around in my breakfast; then popped up to my ears and drawed all the blood out'n my nose except a little sack that got left in the point to swell and tingle. It's a singular thing, but the first time that nigger's fist hit the door I knowed it was the knock of death. I can smell death. It's a gift, I reckon, one of them no-count gifts like good conversation that don't do you no good no more. Once Cousin John Mebane come to see us, and as he leaned over to pat me on the head—he was polite and hog-friendly to everybody, chillun and poverty-wropped kin especial—I said, Cousin John, what makes you smell so funny? Ma all but took the hide off'n me; but four days later they was dressen him in his shroud. Then I didn't know what it was I'd smelled, but by this time I'd got better acquainted with the meanen.

Ma was rollen tapers for the mantel. She stiffened a spell like she was listenen for the North wind to rise; rolled out a taper and laid it down. She went to the door and put her hand square on the knob; hesitated like she knew what was comen; then opened it.

There stood Rhears. He was the coachman. Him and his wife Della was ma's pets. The both of'm was give to ma by her pa at the marryen; and in a way that folks don't understand no more, they somehow become a part of her. Ma liked horses that wanted to run away all the time, and Rhears was the only nigger on the place that could manage'm. He was a powerful, dangerous feller. He'd killed the blacksmith and two free niggers in the other county before ma brought him to Long Gourd. His shoulders jest but stretched across the openen, as he stood there in a respectful-arrogant sort of way with a basket-knife in his hand.

"What do you want, Rhears?" his mistress asked.

"I want to speak to Mister McGregor," he said.

Pa had been scratchen away at his secretary. At "Mister" the scratchen stopped. That last scratch made more noise in my ears than the guns at Shiloh. Without a word, without even looken behind him, pa stood up and reached for his gun. The secretary was close to the fireplace and had a mirror over it. He didn't waste no time, but he didn't hurry none either. He just got up, took off his specs, and laid them as careful on the secretary, just like he meant to set'm in one special place and no other place would do. He reached for the gun and turned.

Rhears warn't no common field hand. He was proud, black like the satin in widow-women's shirt-waists, and spoiled. And his feelens was bad hurt. The day before, pa had whupped Della, and Rhears had had all night to fret and sull over it and think about what was be-en said in the quarters and how glad the field hands was she'd been whupped. He didn't mean to run away from his home like any blue-gum nigger. He jest come a-marchen straight to the house to settle with pa before them hot night thoughts had had time to git cooled down by the frost.

Pa turned and walked towards him. He still moved as steady and solemn. I watched the even distance each boot-heel made and calculated that two more steps would put him up to the threshold. Just to look at him you might have thought he was a-goen towards the courthouse to pay his taxes or walken down the aisle to his pew.

All of a sudden he come to a stop. Ma's brown silk skirt had spread out before him. I looked up. There she was, one hand tight around the gun stock, the othern around the barrel. Her left little finger, plunged like a hornet's needle where the skin drew tight over pa's knuckles, made the blood drop on the bristly hairs along his hand; hang there; then spring to the floor. She held there the time it took three drops to bounce down and splatter. That blood put a spell on me.

A gold shiver along ma's dress made me look quick at their faces. Her hair was a shade darker than the dress she was wearen and slicked down around her ears. There wasn't no direct sun on it, but a light sorghum color slipped up and down as if it was playen on grease. The light might have come from her eyes, for they was afire. She was always fine to look at, although her face wasn't soft enough to rightly claim her beautiful. But she would have taken the breeches away from any ordinary man, I tell you. She'd rather manage folks than eat. Pa ought to have let her do a sight more of it than he did. She was happier than I ever seen her the time he went to the legislature. But he didn't take to politics somehow. He said the government rooms smelled too strong of tobacco. He was a mighty clean man, the cleanest I ever come across. Took a washen once a day reg'lar. When I come to think about ma, I see her a-studyen about somethen, with a wrinkle in her eyes. She didn't have to tell the servants not to bother her then. They stayed out of her way or went tippen around if their work took'm near her.

Well, pa saw he couldn't get his gun out of her grip without acting ungentlemanly. He gave her a curious look and a low bow; then turned it loose. Taken off his coat and folden it, he laid it across a chair. Ma was marbly-pale when she stepped out of the way, but she moved easy and steady.

For a long time I never could make out the meanen of them looks, nor why ma done what she done. And she never set us right about it. She wasn't the explainen kind, and you can bet nobody never asked. I'd just as soon've asked the devil to pop his tail. It's bothered me a heap in my time, more'n it's had any right

to. I reckon it's because I always think about it when I'm taperen off. That's a time when a man gits melancholy and thinks about how he come not to be president and sich-like concerns. Well, sir, when I'd run through all my mistakes and seen where if I'd a-done this instead of that how much better off I'd be today, and cuss myself for drinken up my kidneys, I'd always end up by asken myself why that woman acted like that. I've knowed a sight of women in my day, knowed'm as the Bible saints knowed'm, as well as in a social and business way; and I'm here to say, sir, they are stuffed with dynamite, the puniest of'm.

It was a question of authority, and a time when whuppen was out of the argyment. All you had to do was look at Rhears and that basket-knife sharpened thin like a dagger, a-hangen as innocent agen his pant leg, to see he didn't mean to take no whuppen. He must have felt in his Afrykin way that pa had betrayed him. Folks jest didn't whup their house servants, and Rhears was a-meanen to teach pa his manners. Niggers can think straight up to a certain point, and beyond that the steadiest of'm let their senses fly like buckshot, high to scatter. It never struck him that Della needed her whuppen. No, sir, he was jest a-standen in the door tellen pa he warn't his marster.

Now ma might have thought that pa ought, with his proper strength, to show him who his marster was. There ain't no doubt but what he had to show it in some way, or he might as well have sold all his niggers for any work he could a got out'n them. Still it was a powerful big risk to run. And it was plain she was a-meanen for him to run it.

Anyway, that was the construction the kin put on it, and it was natural they would. But it never satisfied me. I got it in my head that Rhears warn't the only person on Long Gourd who didn't claim pa his marster. Before I tell you what I mean, give me a little taste of that shuck juice—half a glass'll do, jest enough to settle the dust in my belly. I'm about to choke to death with the drought.

Aah . . . that's sweet to the taste. Now, sir. You'll excuse

me if I lean over and whisper this. *That other body was ma.* I know it ain't a-goen to sound right, for she and pa had the name of be-en a mighty loven couple. But a man and woman can fight and still love. Most of'm enjoy fighten. I ain't never seen one get wore out with it. They can go on with a fight for years. Can git fat on it. When they win out, they put the man down amongst the chillun and give him a whuppen when he forgits his manners or sasses back. But if he's stout enough to put her and keep her in her place, she don't hold it agin him. She's proud to think she picked such a game one. That's how come I never married. I'm peaceful by nature. Ain't but one thing ever gits me fighten mad: that's putten salt in my whisky. That riles me. I'll fight a elyplant then.

Well, sir, that morning Della was late. Ma had had to send for her twice, and she come in looken like the hornets stung her. She fluffed down to her sewen and went to work in a sullen way, her lip stuck out so far it looked swole. And they ain't nothen meaner-looken than a blue-black, shiney lip of a sullen nigger woman. It looks like a devil's pillow.

Directly ma said, "Della, take out that seam and do it over again."

"Take it out yourself, if it don't suit," she flounced back.

In a second pa was on his feet: "Woman, lay down that sewen and come with me."

Them was his words; and if a nigger can git pale, Della done it. She seen right away what a mistake she'd made. She fell on the floor and commenced to grab at ma's skirts. "Don't let him whup me, Mistiss. Don't let him." For a while ma didn't say a word.

"Get up off that floor and come with me," said pa again.

"Mister McGregor, what are you going to do with this girl?"

Pa never made her no answer. He walked over and lifted Della up by the arm.

"Don't you tech me: you don't dare tech me. I belongs to Mistiss."

Pa shuck her till her teeth rattled; then she stopped her jumpen

and goen on and stood there a-tremblen like a scared horse.

"Mister McGregor," come ma's even tones, "you're not going to punish that girl. She's mine."

And with that pa turned and said in a hard, polite way he never used before to ma: "And so are you mine, my dear." Then he nodded to Della to go before him, and she went.

When he came back, ma was standen in the middle of the floor just where he had left her. She hadn't moved a peg. She just stood there, stiff as a poker, her head thrown up and her eyes as wide as a hawk's.

"I have whipped Della and sent her to the field for six months. If at the end of that time she has learned not to forget her manners, she may take up again her duties here. In the meantime, so you will not want, I've sent for P'niny. If you find her too old or in any way unsuitable, you may take your choice of the young girls."

He waited a breath for her answer and when it didn't come, got on his horse and went runnen over the back road down to the fields. No other words passed between them that day. At supper the meal went off in quick order. There wasn't no good old-fashioned table talk. Everybody was as polite to one another as if they was visiten. Ma sat at the foot, froze to her chair. Pa at the head like a judge expecten shooten in the court. We knew somethen was bound to blow up and bust; and I do believe if somebody had tromped on a hog bladder, we chillun'd a jumped under the table.

Next mornen it come. That bow of pa's, as he let go of the gun, was his answer to the challenge. For you might almost say pa had whupped ma by proxy. And here was Rhears, agen by proxy, to make him answer for it . . . a nigger and a slave, his mistress's gallant, a-callen her husband and his marster to account for her. I don't reckon they'd been any such mixed-up arrangement as that before that time; and I know they ain't since.

I scrouched back in the corner and watched, so scared my eyes turned loose in their sockets. If Jesus Christ had a touched me on the shoulder and said, "Come on, little boy, and git your harp,"

I'd a no more looked at him than if he'd a been my dog come to lick me. For pa and Rhears was a-eyen one another. This fight was to be accorden to no rules. I saw straight off it would start fist and skull and work into a stomp and gouge. If pa didn't manage to git that knife away from the nigger, it would be cut and grunt as well.

Pa was the slimberer of the two, but he wouldn't a looked it away from Rhears. From necked heel up he was six feet—no, six feet four—and his boots raised him an ench higher. Right away he took a quick easy step forward, and both of'm tied their muscles together. Rhears tightened his fingers around the knife. I looked at pa's breeches. They fit him tight; and the meat rolled up, snapped, then quivered under the cloth. His butt give in at the sides and squeezed away its sitten-down softness. His waist drawed in and pumped the wind into his chest, a-pushen out his shoulders just as easy and slow. I don't believe you could have found a man in the whole cotton country hung together any purtier.

Pa, quick-like, sunk his hand in and around the black flesh of Rhears' neck. The knife swung backwards, but pa grabbed it with his left hand before it could do its damage. A breath, and Rhears was a-spinnen round the room. The basket-knife lay in the door as still as any of the pine floor boards. This rattled the nigger some. He had figured on gitten Mister McGregor in the door, where he could a used the knife to advantage. Fighten in his mistress's room, a place he didn't feel at home in, rattled him some more. So before he could come to himself good, pa lambed a blow into his black jaw. It was a blow fit to down a mule, but Rhears shook his head and run in to close; changed quick; dropped low and butted. Four quick butts jambed pa agen the wall, where he saved his guts by grabben Rhears' shoulders—to hold. That kinky hunk of iron slowed down. Both men shook under the strain. The noise of destruction held up. All you could hear was a heavy-pumpen blowen, like to wind-broke horses drawen a killen load . . . then a rippen cry from Rhears' coat—and it was good broadcloth—as it split both ways from the small

of his back. Both men drawed in their breaths for a long second.

Sudden-like pa's head and chest went down and forward. His feet pressed agen the wall. Slow as candy pullen he broke the nigger's holt on the front muscles of his thighs. But that nigger's grip never give. No, sir. What give was two drippen hunks of leg meat. Just the second that holt was broke pa shifted neat and shoved hard. Rhears smashed a sewen table top into kindlen wood before he hit the wall. That table saved his neck, or I'm as good



a man as I used to be. Before he could get his bearens, pa was a-pounden his head into the hard pine floor. I looked for the brains to go a-splatteren any time, and I begun to wonder how far they would slide on the floor's smooth polish. But God never made but one thing tougher'n a nigger's head—and that's ironwood. Slowly Rhears raised up and, with a beautiful strain of muscles, got to his feet. Then him and pa went round the room. It looked like that bangen had set the nigger crazy. A stranger comen into the room would a thought he was set on breaken up ever stick of furniture, a-usen pa for his mallet. Once the two of'm come close to ma, so close the wind they made blowed her skirts; but

never a peg did she move. She held as rigid as a conjure woman.

Directly the nigger begun to wear some. All that crazy spurt of energy hadn't done him no good. Gradually pa's feet touched the floor more and more; then they didn't leave it. The panten got heavier, more like bellows. A chair got in their way. They went over it. They did a sight of rollen—up to the door crowded with house servants, all a-looken like they had fell in the ash-hopper. You could follow how far they'd rolled by the sweat on the floor. It looked like a wet mop had been run by a triflen hand. Then, sir, my hairs straightened up and drawed in to hide under the scalp. Rhears had ended up on top and was a-shiften to gouge. Pa looked all wore down. I tried to holler to ma to shoot, but my throat was as parched as it is right this minute. . . . Thank you, sir. You are very generous.

Have you ever seen a long dead limb stretched between sky and droppen sun? Well, that's how still ma held on to that gun of pa's. I couldn't stand to see them black thumbs go down. As I turned my head, I heard the nigger holler. Pa had jerked up his knee and hit him in a tender spot. He fell back and grabbed himself. It must have been an accident, for pa made no move to take advantage of the break. He just lay there and let Rhears take hold of himself and git at pa's throat. I never seen such guts in nobody, nigger or white man. Bump went pa's head on the floor. Bump and agen. Ever time he lifted pa, he squeezed tighter. Ever time he come down he pushed him forward.

It had been one of them frosty December mornens, and a fire had been burnen in the chimney since first light. The front stick had been burned in two and left between it and the back stick a heap of red and blue hickory coals. They don't make no hotter fire than that. I saw right away what Rhears had in mind. Every time he bumped my father's head against the floor, he was that much nearer the hearth. Pa wriggled and jerked, but his wind was cut and the black blood ran into his eyes. Those heavy black hands growed deep in the red, greasy flesh of pa's neck.

They moved slower towards the fire, for pa had at last clamped

his legs in a way to slow'm down. Then I saw him reach for his pocket. Rhears didn't see this move. His eyes was bucked on what they had in mind to do, and the heat from the hickory logs made'm swell with a dark, dry look of battle luck. After some fumblen pa finally brought out his knife. He opened it in a feeble way over the nigger's back, and let it rip and tear through his ribs. The blood first oozed; then spouted. It fell back from the knife like dirt from a turnen plow. Then pa made a jab back of the kidneys. That done for him. He grunted, turned loose and rolled over like a hunk of meat.

Staggering to his feet, pa went over and leaned agen the mantel. Directly Rhears spoke up, so low you could hardly hear him:

"Marster, if you hadn't got me, I'd a got you."

Then he shook with a chill, straightened out, and rolled back his eyes. Mister McGregor looked at him a minute before he turned to his wife. And then no words passed his mouth. He reached out his hand and she walked over and handed him the gun. He reached over the mantel and, his arms a tremblen, set the gun back in its rack.

"Bring me a pan of warm water, the turpentine, and the things out of my medicine chest." That was ma speaken, sharp and peremptory, to the servants in the doorway. "And take this body out of here," she added in a tone she used when the girl Sally failed to dust behind the furniture.

"Sit down in that chair, Mister McGregor, so I can dress your wounds."

Pa done what she told him. She worked away at him with deft, quick fingers. Directly I hears her in a off-hand way, her head benden over and her hands busy wrappen:

"Colonel Winston will be through here on the way South. I think it would be best to sell him Della."

"I think that, my dear," said pa, "would be the most sensible thing to do."

UNCLE JEFF

JESSE STUART (Graduate School, 1931-2)

Pa and Finn and me are on our way to see Uncle Jeff. Uncle Jeff is in a railroad hospital at Ferton, West Virginia, and he is likely to kick the bucket. Don't know though, Pa said Uncle Jeff was tough as an old rooster. But there must be somethin wrong. He sent for Pa. And Pa takes us along, he says, to help him get about in the city and to find the hospital. Pa hates the town, for he can't read and he gets mixed up in signs. Pa never knows where he is goin unless he asks someone and he says he hates to be askin everybody he meets where this is and that is. So Pa up-and-takes us boys. And we are glad to go with him.

"I told Brother Jeff," says Pa, "to quit that damn railroad when they offered him the little pension that time. That would have been better'n stickin it out for a few dollars on the month and endin up in a hospital among strangers where a body don't know a soul."

"What is the matter with Uncle Jeff, Pa," I said, "that he is about to die?"

"He is a broke-down man," said Pa with tears in his eyes. "He is like I am. Look at me—I am a broke-down man. If you follow workin on a section long as your Uncle Jeff, then you would have one foot in the grave and the other ready to slide in too. He's been on that Chatworth section for thirty-three years. Could have been a boss if he had had the education. Can't read. Just like I am. Now you boys see that it pays to take education. I couldn't take it for there was none offered here in these Kentucky hills when I was a boy."

"Wasn't Uncle Jeff in a wreck one foggy mornin on a motor car?" asked Brother Finn.

"Yes," said Pa, "Brother Jeff and eighteen more men were hit by a Big Sandy train. The car was in the fog and the train was

in it too and they didn't see each other. Your Uncle Jeff leaped like a frog or he would a been where some of the others are today. Part of the motor car and some of the men flew through the air and lit on them like a bird. Brother Jeff was knocked cold as a icicle. When he woke up they had him in the railroad hospital in Ferton where we are goin now. Brother Jeff has not been well since. He is not able to work. He is like a horse too old to plow but has to pull the plow just the same. I am a horse too broke-down to pull the plow, but I have to pull it just the same."



"We are in Ferton now," says Brother Finn, "we are in West Virginia."

And Pa says: "Yes, West Virginia, look how these damn big-headed people hold their heads up above us. It is not like back over there in Kentucky. I went to work in the mines up in Cattle Branch, West Virginia, when I was sixteen years old and the place where I boarded had so many bedbugs I had to leave. I'd like to tell these people about the bedbugs they got in this State—more than any State in the Union."

Pa asks Finn to read the signs. Brother Finn is younger than

I am, but he can read. He has been to school and he can cipher some and read pretty well. He is not like Pa.

But here we go. People do look at us and Pa gets hot behind his collar. Pa is not as big as we are. He walks between us with a big gray overcoat on that strikes him around the ankles. I found the overcoat in an old house and gave it to him. I believe he sorty thinks I stole it. Finn is almost a head above the crowd and my old blue overcoat just strikes him about five inches above the knees. But Finn looked right good in it. I have a new overcoat and I look better than Pa or Brother Finn. Pa's hair is out a little long and it rolls up a little at the edge of his thick felt black cap. I don't have on a hat. Finn has on a gray felt hat. And we walk up the street toward the hospital.

Pa says: "Ferton is a big town. Look at these big houses that cover a square."

Pa likes to see flashin signs. He asks Finn to read them for him. Finn reads the signs for Pa since Finn reads better than I do.

Then Pa says: "It took a lot of money to build that house. It took piles of money—a flour barrel of money. I'd like to see all the money it took in one pile. I'd like to be in it with a coal scoop for five minutes and I'd have all I could shovel. I'd never go back out on that section. Boys, look at these houses, won't you. Damned if they ain't a plum sight."

We do not ride a street car to the hospital. We walk to it to save the money. We will need the money gettin back home and Finn and me have planned somethin for Pa. We are goin to surprise Pa. He has never seen a picture show and we intend to take him to one after we leave the hospital. We are now in sight of the hospital.

Pa says: "Here is the place they had Brother Jeff before. Walk right in, boys—I've been here at this place before."

And we walk in behind Pa. He walks up to a desk where a woman in a white dress is writin somethin on a piece of paper.

Pa says, "Jeff Powderjay in this hospital?"

"Jeff Powderjay? Yes, he is here."

"I want to see him," says Pa.

"He is too bad to let anyone see him," says the woman and she looks mean out of a pair of nose-glasses.

"Beats all," says Pa. "A man comes forty miles and can't see his dyin brother."

"Well, you can't see him," says the woman, "and that's that."

"Well, by God I will see him," says Pa, "or they'll be more patients in this hospital than you already got."

I saw Pa was gettin hot behind the collar and so I whispered to Finn: "Get a hold of Pa before he gets us all into it. You can do more with him than I can."

Finn takes Pa by the arm and says, "Come on, Pa, and let's see the hospital doctor. He'll let us see Uncle Jeff."

Down the corridor we take Pa until we come to a sign that says DOCTOR.

"Here," says Finn. "Wait a minute." And Finn finds him.

"You want to see Jeff Powderjay?" says the doctor. "It is good that you have come to see him. None of his kin have come to see him and he will not get back to Kentucky alive, I am afraid."

"Can we see him?" asks Pa.

"Yes," says the doctor and he leads the way with a bunch of keys in his little soft hand.

"Look at that hand, won't you," says Pa. "What if he worked like I have to, tampin ties and layin tee rails. Makin sod lines and makin right-of-way. He wouldn't have hands like that. Look," and Pa shows us his hands—hands that we have seen and felt so many times before.

"Here we are," says the doctor. "You'll find Jeff Powderjay right in that room." He opens the door and walks away.

Pa goes in first. "Hello, Jeff," he says, "do you know me?"

"Know you?" says Uncle Jeff. "Know you? What do you think I am? I'd know you in hell, Mick. You are boy number eleven, and I am number ten. Ain't that right?"

"Yes," says Pa. "And we are supposed to have the same Mama

and Pappie—and I believe we have. Pa was a scoundrel, but Mama was a decent woman."

"Yes," says Uncle Jeff. "And you come up to see me kick the bucket."

"I come to see you," says Pa.

"Well, I am goin to kick the damn bucket this time," says Uncle Jeff.

Finn doesn't say a word. Pa and Uncle Jeff are doin all the talkin. But Uncle Jeff spies Finn.

"Come over here, you little son-of-a-gun," he says. "You look for all the world like your Pap. Come over here and say good-by and old-Satan-bless-you-Uncle Jeff. And you," pointin to me, "come over here, you big son-of-a-gun and say good-by and Satan-bless-you to your Uncle Jeff."

I see it is gettin under Pa's skin. Pa is twistin and squirmin in his chair. Pa doesn't do that unless somethin is gougin at his heart.

Pa says, "Take it easy, Jeff."

And Uncle Jeff says: "Take it easy, hell. It is that big-tailed thing they got waitin on me. She is tryin to kill me too soon. She knows I ain't goin to get out of this hole this time. I got out once before—and I prayed to God to get out. Now I am cussin and prayin for the Devil to get me."

"The Devil?" says Pa.

"Yes, the Devil," says Uncle Jeff. "I want to go somewhere and the Lord won't have me. I've been prayin to die ever since I got broke down in that wreck and God won't take me. I guess the Devil will. I want to go some place."

I wish that Uncle Jeff would let loose of my hand. He is holdin to my hand and talkin to Pa. His hand is soft and warm and wrinkled like a thawed-out black snake. His lips have fallen down at the corners, beard is over his face—a white and red-sandy beard. His eyes are the color of faded slate.

"Give me a chew of red-horse," says Uncle Jeff. "A damn liar,

Mick. Doctor says no—but give me a chew of red-horse, and I'll give you a cup of water in hell."

Tears come to Pa's eyes and he says to Finn, "I'll give him a chew even if that doctor throws me out of this hospital."

"That is what I want—it tastes sweet," says Uncle Jeff. "You know I am glad that I have chewed tobacco. It has been enjoyment to me all my life. It is that damn big-tailed nurse. She is tryin to kill me. I want to go back over on the Big Sandy and die there. I want to go back home to die, back where Pap and Ma died. I am goin back too."

"Now lay in the bed, Jeff—you can't get up," Pa is coaxing Uncle Jeff. "Lay still and you'll be able to get home by next week."

"Goddamn you, Mick, don't sit up there and lie to me like that. You ain't foolin nobody, not even yourself. You know more than that, surely. The Devil, the Lord and the ground are goin to get me—maybe one, maybe all three. I hate to leave my little children by my second wife—but goddamn her she is a bitch and I know it, a bitch. That bachelor can run her all he damn pleases. He has run her and I know it—the-son-of-a-bitch."

And I say to my brother Finn while Pa and Uncle Jeff are talkin, "I remember Uncle Jeff before he married his second wife. He was a handsome man then. He was a young man in the bloom of life. He married Aunt Tinnie, as pretty a woman as ever the Kentucky sun shone on. They had three children by that marriage, Daisy, Silva, and Jewel. Then Aunt Tinnie died and lost her fourth baby with her dead body, you understand. Uncle Jeff worked on the section and raised three girls until they married and had homes of their own. He always said he would never bring a stepmother in over his 'three little dears.' He had a time hirin a girl to take care of them and buyin food for them on a section man's wages, but he did. He raised three fine girls too. Then they left him in the old house alone. So he goes and marries this last wife. An old man and a young woman. Results. You see, you know."

"I remember Uncle Jeff givin me candy and showin me how to

fight bitin dogs," says Finn. "That was when he used to come and visit us livin on the Collins' place."

And now Pa and Uncle Jeff are talkin louder than ever.

"We had the measles together, Mick," says Uncle Jeff, "and they had us down in the left-hand corner of that big room instead of the back room, I remember. And you looked through a crack in the wall and saw the only turkey Ma had, and you said, 'How about eatin that turkey, Jeff?' And I said, 'W'y that is a go, all you'll have to do is say the word to Ma.' And you said the word to Ma. She killed that turkey for us. I'll never forget it. You got anything you wanted because you was her baby—you was child number eleven."

"That is right," says Pa. "After Ma died the girls found some cake she had put away for me. I was her baby."

"The nurse is comin," says Finn.

"Keep that goddamn big-tailed thing out of this room," says Uncle Jeff. "Keep her out, Mick."

"Time to take your medicine. Time the visitors should leave, too," says the nurse.

"Time for you to get out of here and stay out of here," says Uncle Jeff.

"He is out of his head," says Pa.

"You are a goddamn liar, Mick, and you know you are," says Uncle Jeff. "I am just not goin to get out of here alive and I want to get out of here alive and die back over on Big Sandy. And I don't like a goddamn gown to sleep in. Look at this—looks like a mother-hubbard on me. And I don't want that damn medicine.

"I've done that all my life," says Uncle Jeff. "I've took my medicine—thirty-three years of it on a section and the last part of it with a crooked woman. I've had all the damn medicine I want. I'd sooner be in hell. It doesn't matter a damn to me. I ain't been such a mean man. I'm not such a good one. I've always had trouble gettin right and wrong straightened out."

"You are goin to take your medicine?" asks the nurse.

"No; by God."

"Die then."

"That's what I am goin to do and you are goin to do."

But the doctor comes in. "My good man, take your medicine," he says.

And Uncle Jeff says, "Don't ever send that damn woman back in here. She don't know what it is all about."

The doctor laughs and says, "No, she doesn't know what it is all about."

"Now, Mick," says Uncle Jeff, "you didn't bring the scissors back you borrowed that time—you promised to bring them back Saturday."

"Out of his head," says Pa—"out of his head sure as God made little green apples."

"But, Mick, you can give me them scissors in hell. I'm not out of my head. You're goin home, I see. We will not meet here again—we'll meet in hell. Bring them scissors."

Pa holds his shriveled snake-like hand and wipes the tears with his other hand.

"Good-by, Uncle Jeff," I say.

"Good-by, Uncle Jeff," says Finn.

"You boys don't work on no goddamn railroad," says Uncle Jeff.

We walk out holdin Pa. He is a little chicken-hearted and he says: "Brother Jeff is a goner. That work has got him. The time he got hurt they offered him five hundred dollars for compromise and if they had paid him that he didn't get to keep his job. So he took the job. Look at him now. He is a dead man. He had thirty-three years of it. I have had nineteen. Look at me—a wreck. I never was stout as Jeff. Jeff was the best man among us boys."

We go down the Ferton street holding to Pa. Pa is nervous. I have never seen him this nervous before.

"It is three hours before we can get a bus out of here, Pa," I say, "what do you say we see a show?"

"I never saw one of them things and I don't want to see one," says Pa.

"We got to spend some time some place."

"Well, just as you say, then," says Pa. "Not as I care, but looks

to me like we are goin to be late about gettin back home and doin up the work. Cows to milk, hogs to feed, mules to put in the barn, and your Ma can't do all that work. It is killin her.

"Fine building," says Pa, "wish I owned it, but it took money to build a show house like this. Even to velvet rugs for the feet."

Pa sets between us in the theater. He likes the news flashes. "Funny how they do that," he says. "I'll have one on the boys Monday mornin. They won't believe me when I tell them about this."

And the picture shows a man's wife in love with another man. They slip to a hotel. "Just like Jeff's wife exactly," says Pa to Finn. "That woman ought to have her kneck wrong off, doin like that."

"Be quiet, Pa," says Finn. "You are in the theater and people will hear what you say."

"I don't care if they do," says Pa. "A woman like that ought to be shot. She is just like Brother Jeff's wife, only she slips to a hotel and Jeff's wife slips to the brush back up there on Big Sandy."

When we start to leave the theater Pa says: "The power of man is mighty to do a thing like that. But the Bible says man will grow weaker and wiser, and damned if I don't believe it. The boys won't believe me when I tell them all of this."

And we go on out where the bright lights of Ferton are flickerin. We catch the bus back to Kentucky.

Pa says: "Work not done up or anythin. Here it is dark. We got about thirty more miles to go and walk four miles after we leave the main road."

Over the silent, cold earth and back home. The stars shine in the heavens. But we need a lantern to see how to throw the fodder over to the cows. We feed the cows and the mules, slop the hogs and get in the wood.

"Jeff and me used to do this at home," says Pa, "but we'll never do it any more together. I'll be the next one—I'll be the next to go. If you boys ever work on a section I'll hant you from the grave. Get the least wages in the world and do the hardest work. The men that set up in the engines and ride get five times

much as I get. I've worked like a dog and will come down to the end unless you boys take me and your Ma in—come down to the poorhouse. Goddamn a poorhouse to hell! Our section is not far from the poorhouse and they got bastard babies over there, people crazy as hell and pregnant mothers. Got the damnest mixup over there you ever saw. What if I would have to go there in the end and take your Ma? Wouldn't that be awful? I couldn't stand to take her there the way she has worked and bore my children. This is a hard world after all. Think of it, so much to have and so hard to get. Yet, there is plenty—plenty, but not for me nor my kind. I can't read. I ain't been nó place. I never had a chance to go to school. Now I have to take what I can get. Poorhouse may be all I'm able to get."

It is the next afternoon. The rain is fallin and low black clouds, it seems, just scud above the leafless timber. The wind whips through the saw briars. The cows, standin humped up in the barn lot, chew on the ends of old cornstalks. The mules run alongside the fence and bite each other's necks and snicker.

"Sign of fallen weather," says Pa, "when mules play—and sign of a death when two mules ride each other.

"Just as I expected," says Pa, when Finn reads the telegram sayin that Brother Jeff is dead.

"Gettin up in the paper to get a telegram," says Finn.

"Because of that telegram," says Pa, "somebody will have to go to the poorhouse or the orphans' home. That fellow that runs Jeff's wife might take her now, but he won't take the children. They'll have to give them away or send them to the orphans' home. Jeff dies a pauper after thirty-three years of hard work. I can't keep his children. I can't take them. I'll do well to raise what I got."

We see Pa gettin ready. He puts on his old blue suit—his Sunday suit he bought from Lark Jenkins second-handed. He puts on one of Finn's shirts and black bow tie. He takes a black hat out of the trunk and brushes it up a little. He wears it. Ma says he looks real nice. Pa walks out into the rain with all his good clothes on. He is goin to catch Number 8.

Pa has a pass and he can ride right up on Big Sandy. That is one thing they do. They haul him free. But he has to ride in one of the poor coaches—one for the poor people. But Pa is poor and he doesn't mind. He wouldn't know how to act with them Big Bugs on that train in a coach where a man is hired to wipe your shoes off as you leave the coach.

We see Pa go. We see him cross the pasture, go between the wires of a barb-wire fence, then to the ridge road. We see him leavin in the rain.

We do not want to go. We understand that Pa is a little nervous. Uncle Jeff's house is a little two-room shack and part of us would have to sleep in a bed made down on the floor unless some of the neighbors would invite us to stay with them. Pa's other brother, Uncle Joe, used to invite us, but Uncle Joe and Uncle Jeff had trouble about their wives fightin and they have not spoken to each other since last June. Uncle Joe's wife called Uncle Jeff's wife a slut. Finn and I don't go. We leave it up to Pa.

Finn and I, we understand. We were up to Uncle Jeff's last Decoration Day. Pa, Uncle Joe, Uncle Jeff, Finn and me all went to hunt Grandma's grave. We went up the hollow back of Uncle Jeff's house and through heavy timber where the squirrels played right before our eyes. There was a white fuzz from the leaves of such dense foliage that it choked us to breathe it.

"Here," said Uncle Joe, "I used to carry Micky—you and Jeff back in 1882. We had this in corn that year and Pap built that rail fence you see there. He split them rails and built that fence back then."

Pa stopped and picked up a rail. "The hands that split them rails tanned my jacket with a hickory withe a many a time. He worked like a brute and died a pauper," he said.

We gathered the wild flowers—the wild bleeding heart, the wild snowballs, the mountain daisies as we went along. Pa, Uncle Jeff and Uncle Joe helped us. Uncle Joe had to walk with a cane. We walked slowly through the woods, partin our way through the

dense undergrowth of greenbriers and ferns and wild snowball bushes that lapped across a once traveled path.

"This is the right road," said Uncle Joe, "though I ain't been to Ma's grave since she was buried. I never wanted to go back. We have to go out here and through where Pap took that last forty-acre lease from Steve Bocock back in '93. It's all growed up till you wouldn't know it."

There was a dim toe-path leadin down through woods that looked as if they were the trees that Adam roamed among.

"And Grandpa cleared this up once?" I asked.

"Yes," said Uncle Joe. "We farmed this, cleared it up and got it in the first year. Put a rail fence around it to boot."

We followed the dim path through the ferns and under the tall trees. Uncle Joe carried the basket and parted brush with his cane. Soon we came to a point out in a grass field that sloped gently down to a little valley stream of water.

"Over there is where Ma is laid," said Uncle Joe.

When we got there no one could definitely locate her grave. Pa said: "Call old Joe Blevins over here. He knows. He still owns this farm, don't he?"

"Yes," said Uncle Joe.

"Boys," said Joe Blevins, "there are eleven of youn'ns buried here and your Ma is in the middle. She is number six. There are five before her and five after. Right here is the place at this sunken sankfield mound."

Uncle Joe spilled his basket of flowers there.

Uncle Jeff said: "We three brothers are all that's left. I'll be the next to come here. I can't work any more and when a good horse gets so he can't stand work then he's through. You know that. Now right here is where I'll be put. You see to it, Mick."

It was by a little peach tree. Finn stood under it in the bright spring sun and I pulled off a few of its green leaves and one of its old but not shedded blossoms and crumbled them in my hand.

As the rain keeps fallin here and Pa has just gone out of sight now, I understand. They will haul Uncle Jeff on a wagon around

the skirts of that hill we walked over. It will be a long haul, but they will haul him to that point and dig his grave by that peach tree. The rain will be fallin perhaps. It will be white rain and will soak down where I crumbled the peach tree leaves and the faded blossoms last year. Dirt will be piled high there. Pa will be there.

"Wonder if Uncle Jeff's wife will be there?" I think.

It is best to let Pa go, for this is bad weather to sleep on a floor. We don't want to do it. We know where Uncle Jeff will be planted for he told Pa and Pa will see to that. It will be where the green peach tree leaves and the pink peach tree blossoms were crumbled down last year. There will not be the sound of a train whistle back there.

POSS [1]

BRAINARD CHENEY (Class of 1924)

"Now that we're out for ourse'f, I'm goin' to show yuh how to make us some money." Ratliff spoke to Poss, as they waited on the wharf at Darien for the early morning boat to Brunswick.

He stood with his legs apart, bouncing his back against a piling that extended above the edge of the platform. The marsh grass across the river, the hull of the overturned boat beyond the quay, the barnacles on it, even, looked clean-washed in the slant sunlight.

"I all'uz hyearn it take money to make money." Poss did not look up from where he sat on the wide planks, tying a broken shoestring. He sniffled and hawked to clear his throat.

"I've got sump'n figgered out," Ratliff said, shifting his gaze from Poss to the gray-green river. The tide was coming in and dead grass and other driftage moved slowly on the surface. Two hours before he had gone swimming in it. But the river had been clean enough then: what he could see of it. He had come to the wharf after he left the Birdcage and had caught him an hour-and-half nap on the boards, before he took his wash. He looked back at Poss. "While I 'uz walkin' 'round waitin' for it to git time to pull you out, I run into ole man Jackson—you know, buys for Schardt and Schiewitz—on the street goin' some'ers—God knows where! He said they had an order for a limited amount of ash and would pay twelve dollars a thousand for it, six-hundred-foot average. We're a-goin' into the ash business and git rich."

Poss sniffled again. "I'd be satisfied if'n us could git another job on a bow oar. I sho' need a chew: you got any 'backer?"

"A bowhand's never made more'n his rations, and damn hard

[1] Ratliff (Snake) Sutton is a bastard river rat in northeast Georgia, in the 1890's. Learning of his social status, he flees as a child to live with a Negro family. Poss is one of the Negroes with whom the early part of his life is intimately involved. The climax of their relationship is presented in chapter XII of Mr. Cheney's novel, *River Rogue* (Houghton Mifflin, 1942).

rations to boot. Even Bud True admitted to that. We know better'n to try to make money pullin' a bow oar, Poss."

Poss raised his head. "Seems sort-a funny not to be wid him no moah!" He looked at Ratliff. "Ain't yuh got no 'backer?"

Ratliff ran his hand into his hip-pocket. "Damn good fun to me!" His eyebrows puckered as he looked down at Poss, handing him a tobacco plug.

"Sho', us'll git along." Poss turned the chew over in his mouth. "Us all'uz has." He grinned. "How us gonna make dis money?"

Ratliff looked at the plug he held again in his hand, but slipped it into his pocket without cutting a chew. "Goin' to buy stumpage and operate for ourse'f."

"Where us gonna git money to buy stumpage? Mister Bud didn't even have money to do dat."

"Maybe it waun't just money he needed. 'Taint all money. Sho', it takes some. But maybe it won't take so much if we work it right. And that may not be so hard." Ratliff started bouncing against the piling again. "I feel lucky today: luckier than I ever felt in my life."

"You mean lucky wid cyards?"

"Yep. I feel like I could take 'em today."

"You ain't never played so much cyards, Snake. How much money yuh got lef' on yuh?"

"I'll have five dollars left when I git my ticket home. How much kin you let me have to git in the game on the cars going back to Lumber City?"

Poss looked off at four axe-toting raftsmen coming toward the wharf. "I reckon I'll have 'bout eight dollars over. S'pose you lose: where us be den wid our money-makin'?"

"Not much worse off—not enough to make much difference. And I'll still figger out sump'n. Maybe I kin git Uncle Mundy to let us cut the ash on the place."

"Unka Mundy ain't gwine do dat. 'Sides, dat ain't enough to make up no raft."

The soft, vibrating whistle of the boat came to them from the river below. The talking stopped for a moment, then Ratliff went

on. "It'll be a good start. You kin git a long way on a good start." He began his bouncing again. "But you forgettin' I'm feelin' lucky today: luckier than I ever felt 'fore in my life."

Poss grinned at him. They both stepped to the edge of the platform to watch the small, stubby-looking boat pull up to the wharf.

But when they quit the train at Lumber City to walk the ten miles home, Ratliff's luck had added only eight dollars to their joint capital. Their twenty-one dollars would not even pay half of the haul bill, not to mention stumpage. Still he paused on top of a hill, as they crossed the sand ridges east of the town, and gave his river holler. And he shouted at Poss, "A big ash raft!"

During the next two days he talked Uncle Mundy into selling them his forty-three trees at three dollars a thousand feet, to be paid after the raft was sold. With the old man going along to back him up, he extended this credit to cover fifty more from a swamp-owner above them, at three dollars and a quarter a thousand feet; and he hired an ox team for the hauling. This last he effected by paying fifteen dollars down on the feed bill and helper's wages and promising to pay a dollar a thousand for the logs hauled. He borrowed Uncle Mundy's yoke of oxen to fill out the rule cart team. At daybreak Monday morning his and Poss's axes were chucking among the big trees below the bluff field. He said they couldn't afford to lose a minute: it was July and low water was at hand; if the river fell another foot they couldn't get through.

On the following Sunday morning he thought about the contrariness and general cussedness of things as he and Poss put logs into the water at the upper swamp. They were "skiffing" these logs down to Dead River to raft them along with those from Uncle Mundy's place. But Uncle Mundy's logs were still in the woods; the teamster hadn't touched them. He cursed silently as he guided a ten-log skiff along the river channel with a pike pole, his wet shirt-tail slapping bare legs. He had counted on having the logs rafted and ready to go Saturday, but it was black dark when he and Poss had dropped the last tree. He had been surprised that the river had stayed up as well as it had. And on top of everything

else, Uncle Mundy had to rear up about their getting the timber out on Sunday, as he and Poss were leaving home this morning. It tried a fellow's patience.

He looked down at his pole as it stood perpendicular in the water for a moment. It seemed that the river was rising instead of falling: up a couple of inches since they had started. They might have plenty of water, might be better off for havin' lost two days. He hadn't figured the river to rise any in the middle of July. It was beginnin' to look like he might be in too big a hurry. He guessed the market would still be there when they tied up at the Boom. Suspicion rose in his mind. Has all your hurry been gettin' to market? he asked himself. Haven't you been thinkin' about that whore too much? To be sure, he had remembered China since he got back home. Hell, he wasn't a no-mind! He had thought about the let-down feeling that came over him as he got out of the bed that night. And his desire to get away from the place.. Reckon you oughtn't to have hit her, but she looked like a dyin' calf when she caught hold of your wrist, he told himself. A whore had no cause to look like that. And it was only a smack with the back of his hand.

But since then you've turned around in your mind and started back-trackin', he told himself. Queer thing: looks like your through-with-it feelin' got less the farther away you came, and your ready-to-go-back feelin' gits bigger the longer you stay away. He had heard men say they'd got enough—for one bedding! He turned the skiff into the mouth of Dead River.

The flat echo of wooden mauls continued to fill the swamp after night came Monday. From either end of their raft, Ratliff and Poss cast tall, swaying shadows in the wavering light of a small fire. About them in every direction was a dark, level surface of water: it issued from the blackness of the trees to the left, from the trees above and below; to the right (on the open course of Dead River) it caught a pallor, like blue milk, and became invisible again in the woods beyond. The flood water made shallow concave circles about the funnel-shaped trunks. At the raft stern, Ratliff's mauling ceased and he passed by the fire, walking toward the bow. He

wore only a pair of muddy pants, rolled up above his knees. His shoulders and back glistened with sweat. Then his maul sounded alternately with Poss's as they drove the last pins into a forward binder.

When they had finished, he stood leaning upon the mallet handle. His face was drawn and the stubble on it stood out like hog bristles. There were pallid bulges beneath his eyes and a gray-brown ring stained his lips. "Jesus, dark comes quick in this damn swamp!" he said.

The points of Poss's jaws and cheekbones caught the light as he looked up from the binder where he sat. He berathed with a heavy soughing. "Dis fresh come quick, too."

"Yeah. If that Goddurned Terry knew how to handle an ox team in the mud, we'd 'ave had our oars up by now and be ready to go."

Poss wagged a heavy head on a limber neck.

"Well, come on." Ratliff loosed the maul and picked up an axe. "I know where's some black-cypress saplin's that'll make oars—not so far from heah. Reckon this'll gimme a chance to try out my saplin' idea that made Bud True so mad. Git the boat paddle."

Poss had been sitting with his legs flat on the logs, his knees turned in. Now he pulled his knees up under his chin, but did not rise. "You don't aim to git 'em tonight? You kain't see to cut no oars!"

"Christ, yes! We got to git away from heah."

The whites of Poss's eyes caught the firelight. "Gret Gawd, Snake! You don't aim to turn loose tonight?"

"To hell I don't."

"Yestidy you say us had plenty time—wid de river a-risin'."

Ratliff let the axe slide from his shoulder to the log on which he stood. "Yeah, Goddamnit! That 'uz yestidy. How'd I know the river 'uz a-goin' to break loose like the bottom of hell? And she's goin' higher still: we gotta git out'n heah now to have a chance to run off'n this fresh."



"I don't believe us kin keep out'n de swamp on dis much water." Poss looked off toward the river.

The bulges beneath Ratliff's eyes twitched as he looked at Poss. "Kin if we start in time and keep in the middle of the stream."

" 'E's a rough ole river, lak dis."

Staring at Poss, Ratliff's eyes widened and his right cheek trembled. "Hell, Poss." He paused. "Yuh ain't losin' confidence in us?" His gaze shifted to the water pushing against the trees, carrying away bits of moss and bark on its flat surface.

"Naw, sho' not." Poss cleared his throat. "If'n us waun't so wo' out already."

Ratliff squinted like a man in pain. He struck the log with the end of his axe sharply. "This Goddamn son-of-a-bitch kain't lick me!" His voice sounded strained. "I don't git tired." He spoke louder. "I'm a rattlesnake! Just makes me mad and lets out my poison. I'm full of poison and rearin' to go right now!"

"Sho'!" Poss grinned. He slapped a mosquito on his forearm and got up and followed Ratliff to the batteau.

When they got back with the timbers for the oars, Poss said his

backbone was making his belly look like a crosscut saw. Ratliff said Uncle Mundy would be sure to bring them some supper when he brought rations for the trip. It was time he was coming. But it seemed a long while before Uncle Mundy got there, and he brought no supper. He paddled the end of his boat up on the logs and remained seated in it. He had brought neither supper nor rations for the trip. He wanted to know when in damnation they were coming to the house!

Ratliff felt harassed, frazzled out. Damn if Uncle Mundy wasn't gettin' plumb childish. He laid down the oar he was peeling and came to the edge of the raft. How, in the name of common sense, did Uncle Mundy think they'd ever get off tonight without everybody helping some? he said. Tonight! In this freshet? Uncle Mundy caught hold of the sides of the boat and crawled out. He straightened up before he spoke again. "You talk lak you ain't got much respect for dis river, not like no raftsman!"

Ratliff frowned and jerked up his chin. "Do? Well, I got respect enough to know if we don't go pretty quick, we may not be able to in another week." He went on to say that then everybody between Dublin and Darien would be floating ash out of the swamps and drifting it down the river to put a freshet on the market.

"Dat's a thing yuh got to git used to if'n you run de river," Uncle Mundy said.

Sure, if you trifled around and let it happen, Ratliff told him. Uncle Mundy spoke to Poss, too: he urged them both to stop and come on to the house, but when Ratliff said angrily that he would eat supper in Darien three nights hence, he went back to his boat. He stopped beside it and turned again. He looked gaunt and bent in the firelight, but he brought his shoulders up straight. "Dis river a big man! You act like you don't know dat." He left and he did not return.

The old man had grown fractious as hell, Ratliff thought. Since yesterday morning he had deliberately gone about making trouble for them. Ratliff had to take off time to paddle to the house and get the rations. It was midnight before they finally untied the ropes

that moored the raft among the swamp trees and pushed it out into the open course of Dead River.

As pilot, he worked the bow oar at night to see ahead better, and left the stern to Poss. Now the current (usually slight in Dead River) moved their raft like shoal water, carrying them, when they came out of the mouth, beyond the middle of the main stream. Slowly the raft responded to Ratliff's deep short pulls and straightened out on the back of the big Oconee. He stood still for a moment, mid-raft, with his oar motionless. The pulse of the current was like a drink of liquor to him. Blood stirred in his head, the heaviness behind his eyes, on his shoulders, dissolved.

He turned his face slowly about, staring into the vagueness of the dark. The heavy overcast of clouds was now dimly translucent with moonlight. Beyond the circle of their raft fire, it sifted a thin, shadowy, gray dust upon the scene. The river's spread, invisible in extent, made it look unfamiliar. Near-by its surface took shape and was touched with evanescent glints, but he could not make out the edge of the swamp, only its indefinite outline against the sky. The raft moved on and he discerned a formless, darker gray to his left, which he knew to be the willow piles at the end of the reach.

He felt the tug of a crosscurrent toward the willows and dipped his oar to the right. "Half-a-lick to Injun!" He called to Poss in a low voice, as a driver reassures a horse. Far in the swamp to his left, he heard the flapping of an owl's wings. He'll have to get out of there to find supper, he thought. Now he felt a pull beneath the raft to his right. Her back's damn slippery tonight! He stood still and squinted his eyes at the dark. Then he shut them for a moment and stopped breathing. That's it! The rattle of the water at Devil's Elbow: he could hear it above the soft swell of sound on the surface around him. He had told Poss before they left that they'd know pretty quick whether they were going to get to Darien, they'd know as soon as they hit the Elbow. If they got by that, there wasn't anything else could stop them.

Now he tried to estimate the distance of that indistinct rattling. "Heah 'er, Poss? 'Sa half-a-mile."

"'Bout dat." Poss's voice sounded distant.

Ratliff began his pull by the sound in his ears. He moved his oar with deliberate care, calling the licks to Poss in a low voice. As the rattle grew louder, he moved faster. Then suddenly he was on it: the swarming hiss and slap of sound was in his head; glints of light, flecks of foam, slats of shadow danced at the corners of his eyes. His oar bent like a rib under his driving. He ran and sweat rained down his body. The logs under him rocked on the flood, sweeping down upon the swamp. There was a crushing jerk and a shadow became solid: the right corner of the bow had hung on a tree. The stern was swinging fast into the suck. He strained at his oar. Then a wooden pin popped up into the darkness, the boom log and butting binder pushed upward and skidded past the black trunk, leaving a white scar. The raft moved again; momentum carried it onward down the river, past the suck.

Now it was in the grip of another unseen current, that dragged it toward the opposite swamp, and Ratliff bent his oar again. "Strap 'er to the point!" he shouted at Poss. From both ends of the raft they pulled against the drift. The dark, rumpling river swept across the logs. Water sluiced about his ankles. The raft was sinking. Slowly the logs rose above the surface again, and they were around the bend. They continued to pull at the oars for a time, then the pulling slowed, stopped. They were in the reach: Devil's Elbow was behind them.

Ratliff leaned against his oar and panted, looking back at Poss's crooked, shadowy form beyond the firelight. His gaze shifted to the water lapping at the end of the raft. Plenty of current in the reaches, all right, he thought. Then he clasped the lazy-pin on the oar handle and leaned backward. He lifted his face to the sky. He yelled, starting low and gathering volume and pitch in a prolonged hallo. He listened to the echo rocking down the river. "Catch 'im, rabbit dog!" he called. Poss laughed. He yelled again. "Red-headed woman!"

The raft drifted out of the reach and around a bend, and another, and another bend. Sometimes he could recognize the shore-

line, sometimes he could not make it out. The night wore on in even darkness. The shadow swamps, the invisible currents, the wabbling shapes of his oar blade and the water before him, grew unreal. They lulled his senses. Standing still on a reach, he could feel his feet growing numb, his shoulders sagging under their weight. The Elbow was back there, but—a feeling of steep sliding took hold of him. Some new, unknown current sucking them into unknown swamp! His throat tightened and his insides jerked. He shook his shoulders. "Cut it out!" he said.

He turned and looked behind him. Beyond the flickering embers was Poss's pale figure sagging against his oar handle. "Wake up, back theah, Possum!" he yelled.

Poss grunted. "Wish I had me a block to sit on," he said.

"If'n you did you'd topple over in that river in five minutes." Ratcliff cut a step on his plank walk. They drifted on.

He began thinking of his experimental bow oar. Bud True raised hell with you for bringing that cypress sapling to the bluff that day, he told himself. He recalled Bud's oaths. Old Bud's eyes would bug out if he could have seen the way this cypress sapling worked at the Elbow, he told himself. He tried to conjure up the astonished face. But the face that suddenly formed in his mind was not True's: it was Mona's, sharp and greasy-eyed. He started from fright. He did not know why. Then a wave of embarrassment and shame came over him, making the nerves jerk in his arms. Name of Christmas! he thought, and astonished himself. The phrase gave him almost as strange a turn as the face. He had not used it since he ran away from home. What in hell is it all about? he asked himself. He did not try to find out.

"Poss?" he called, and Poss grunted. "Yuh still back theah?" He grunted again. "Ole Debil snap 'e elbow on us," Ratliff said, imitating Poss's voice, "but us ez slip tru!" He gave a hacking laugh. Then he lifted his face and yelled:

Run, Mister Bug, your bee gum's gone!
Run, Mister Bug, the raftsman's horn!

He yelled it again and again.

The raft picked up speed. He saw the gray fog of willow piles to his left, close at hand. He made out the shallow bend in the river. They were just above the mouth: the Altamaha was beyond. Then we will be out of trouble, he told himself. The raft seemed to be sliding down a rapids. He stood rigid and staring. Now it seemed to be slowing up: they must be in the bight below the mouth. He pulled at his oar, called for strokes to the white side. When they were in the reach, he yelled again:

> Look-a, Look-a heah—
> We got Sunday, we got Sunday!

He walked back and put lightwood on the embers of their fire. His eyes looked like a startled deer's in the fresh blaze.

At his oar again, he could see no shoreline. Then he made out a gray-black silhouette to his left. That must be Town Bluff, he thought, or was. He felt the tremor of a crosscurrent, but did not move. The face in his mind now was his mother's. It stood out like a stereopticon picture. There were reddening patches on her cheeks below her temples and she stared at him. There was another face beside it: the young doctor's, Watson's. The faces brought him a feeling of confused suspicion. They were standing at her bedroom door, where they had started up from their seats as he opened it. What the hell! What the hell! he thought.

He turned back. The fire still sent up flame and he could see Poss's glazed eyelids. He looked like he was asleep, standing there with the oar in his hand. "Cheer up, Possum," he called. "I'm a-goin' to fix you so yuh kin stay awake." He went back to the fire and picked up the coffeepot. He shook it, then dipped it in a jog hole and caught river water in it.

Poss stirred at his oar. "Snake, you better not stay 'way from de bow so long," he said. "I'll fix dat coffee."

"Aw, to hell with the bow!" His voice had a sharp, unsteady inflection in it. "I got eyes in the back of my head." But Poss sidled along the boom log toward the fire and Ratliff went back to

his oar. "Cook us sump'n t'eat while yuh at it, Poss. Ain't you hongry?" Poss was getting out the frying pan and did not reply, and he went on in his heightened tone, "Danged if I couldn't eat a billygoat, horns and all!"

The surface of the river was losing its form, growing misty. The moón must be down, he thought. Day is coming. He spoke to Poss over his shoulder. "Warehouse Landing's ahead of us yonder. We're a long way from the bight." He mocked the hooting of an owl shrilly, then he turned toward the fire. "Put some taters in those ashes to roast, Poss. That's fine ashes. And hell, cook us up a pile of that sowbelly. We still got some of Aunt Tish's cold biscuit. Le's celebrate!"

He looked back. He had felt something behind him. It couldn't have been a shadow, he thought, as he stared into the misty darkness. Crosscurrent? He saw a gray pillow loom in the haze. It took shape. "Great God, a texas, a steamboat!" he said. It was standing nearer the Indian side. He thrust his oar to the left. "Run to the stern!" he shouted at Poss. Behind him Poss set down the spider, and stared. Ratliff could hear the rattle of water around the boat's hull. He looked ahead over his shoulder at the end of his pull. No, the damn thing had moved toward the white! He ran the other way with his oar, yelling at Poss, who had moved only a few feet and stood staring. "'Sa steamboat! Git the hell back, theah!" He did not hear the long, quivering moan that came from Poss. He kept pulling, looking over his shoulder. No noise from the stern wheel, but the damn thing was coming: the deck, now the green window blinds in the pilothouse—plain as midday. He paused. Great God, the thing was still in front of them! "Pull white! Pull like hell!" he yelled. He halted. 'Goddamn! We're gonna bull 'er!" He shoved his oar handle upward to bury the blade.

Suddenly the boat faded, and a piercing belly cry broke from him. It had become trees rushing toward the bow of the raft. The oar jumped out of his hands, caught on a tree trunk. Its blade bent like a hoop and snapped. There were more trees: crunching,

crackling noise. The butting binder jumped into the air. Logs reared up. He felt himself going upward, and leaped.

Warm, thick water closed over him, piled on top. He was rushed along, bumping into things. He tried to pull up to the surface and his head hit a log. He pushed downward and was swept on. He bumped a tree, caught it, and was swung around to the lower side. He made the surface and held to the trunk, panting. He could not see anything, but he could still hear limbs crackling and breaking. Gone to hell! he thought—the whole caboodle!

He got his wind and yelled, "Where yuh, Poss?" He could hear his echo above the rattling current. He called again. It brought only an echo. "Goddamnit, Poss! Answer me!" He kept yelling.

Day came. The surface of the water cleared. It was a milky rust-color and spread about him in thick rumples. Around the tree trunks, it spun in tight whirls. He saw one of his logs hung crosswise between two cottonwoods. Ahead, through the trees, he could see the river. It bent out of sight in the distance. He looked behind him in the swamp. There were the ends of other logs along the suck, wabbling up and down. He did not call. Poss was not there.

BIRDIE

JACK BOONE (B.A.'30, M.A.'31)

Birdie took a shortcut across the fields. She sank to her ankles in the low places, sandy soil overlapping and partly filling her shoes. She crossed a pasture dotted with chalky rock, crawfish holes and the yellow blossoms of prickly pear and waded waist-high through a patch of broomsedge to reach the creek. Slim leopard frogs, gold-green and lavender, slipped through the rough grass as she passed. Furred spiders with folded legs swayed gently on their webs above her head as she parted the willows. The shaggy bark of wild grape vines scraped her ankles; briars and scrubthorns tore at her bare legs. The air was pungent with the smell of moist leaves.

In her mind was the thought of him to whom she was hastening, distance alone holding her from him. Her father, Buck Humphries, the child, were forgotten. Thought began and ended with her lover.

She hadn't told her mother his name. He had cautioned her against this. It would mean death. She didn't care. Without him she wished for death. It would take death to keep her from him.

A sharp breeze off wet vegetation cooled her cheeks. She felt alive and free for the first time in days. And like something wild and akin to earth she moved, aware of the fulness of youth, the sinuousness of her brown body.

She crossed Cleeburn Creek, wading through, her skirts held high to her hips, her reflection dancing zigzag and rippling away before her in fading distortion. The wooded hills hung around her and crawled back in great lapping folds of trembling pine and crisp, dark oak. She climbed the last ridge and approached the squat cabin. Crossing a horse lot, she entered the kitchen without knocking. She hurried through the empty rooms. She threw her valise under Tolby's bed.

Luke was not at home.

She glanced over the room, her lips drooped in disappointment.

"He's gone to Luster Holder's, I'll bet my bottom dollar," she said to herself.

She lay across his bed, tangling the dirty quilts about her thighs. She was aware of a feeling of contentment through her unrest. "I love this place more'n life," she whispered again and again.

From the back doorway she saw through feverish eyes the hills receding until they reached the bottom lands. The sun was passing through thinning clouds: clouds wispy, ragged like the underbreast of a white hen. "The clouds is troublin' the sun," she thought absently. "It'll be a day of light and shade."

Densely in varicolored green, trees walled in the river. She could see the break where it ran. Buzzards floated aimlessly in and out of sight. Bluish vapor melted rapidly as sunlight sifted through it.

A gun sounded, hollow and dismal, far down toward the Forked Deer. It was a boom, then dead silence.

The sound disturbed her; yet she thought of Luke. He was near. She would soon be with him.

It was Luke for sure, she figured. He had gone hunting. She knew he wouldn't go any place where there were dead folks. He was scared of the dead. Superstitious-like. She fingered the hawk's foot suspended from a string at her neck. It kept evil things away.

The gun sounded again. Luke was hunting Bode Holley. That drunken old coward Bode Holley. She sure hoped he shot hell out of him. Luke would fix him so he wouldn't be spouting off at the store. Couldn't anybody fool Luke for long.

"I'm goin' to him," she said in a raised voice, chanting. "I'm goin' to him, the gun it's a-callin' me. I'm goin' to him, the gun it's a-callin' me."

She forgot the heaviness of her condition and ran hurriedly across the horse lot, her soft breasts escaping from beneath her low-necked dress. She pushed through a windbreak of locust trees. She was exhausted by the time she entered the bottom land. Swamp grass wet her dress high up and tickled her legs. Mosquitoes and gnats circled her head, biting her neck and arms. She struck

viciously at a devil's horse which aimed its long nose at her and swooped past her ear.

She stopped short, her mouth gaping open. A long gray-black snake moved sluggishly into a slough. It lifted its head, its wicked little eyes set dead upon her, and darted its tongue in and out rapidly. The still green slime parted and cleaved back as the slough swallowed up the crawling body.

Birdie paused for moments, eyes stretched. A chill swept her body.

"It's a cottonmouth," her mind warned her. "It'll kill you if it bites. Nothin' but strong licker'll cure the bite."

She recalled hearing her pap say that the cottonmouth and the regular water moccasin had bred-up together to make a more poisonous snake. She called, "Luke!" and heard the words echo from the fastness of cypress and water-oak. She thought of the time a cottonmouth had bitten Louenie Kimm. Louenie had swelled double her size and spots as purple as pokeberries had come out on her. Her folks wrapped her up in a plaster made of blue creek mud mixed with a stew of jimson weed and yellow percoon root. She'd laid in bed a long time before getting back like to common.

Recovering her nerve Birdie walked under vine-hung trees; and, not knowing just which way to go, headed in toward the river. Every little while she stopped, cupped her hands around her mouth, and called, "Luke!"

Finally he answered, his voice cracking out to her left. She circled a canebrake and, following the sound of his hulloing, found him squatted by a log, his gun between his legs. A week's growth of beard darkened his heavy jowls. Tobacco juice drizzled from the corners of his mouth. His corduroy suit was slick yellow, his greasy hat pulled low on his forehead; his boots wet and clay-caked. A quart jar of red whisky sparkled on a stump near him. He'd just been saying to himself before she came up, "I'll have one more little snort to stiddy me." He knew it was double-run, charred corn. It would hold a bead the size of Number 5 shot. There

were no rabbit eyes on it to pop off like fresh, watered whisky did.

His mud-brown eyes showed dull and stupid on seeing the girl. He got to his feet, puzzled. He sensed the danger.

"Hursh!" he hissed. "Bode he's down here. He's after me and I'm after him. We bin stalkin' each other fer hours. I've fared off my gun twicet to try and skeer him out. He's afeered to show hissef. We got to keep quiet. He shorely heerd me holler." He stopped and peered hard at her, as if she were someone he'd never seen before. "What the hell you follerin' me down here fer?" he demanded coldly.

Her eyes were on him widely, burningly. She breathed fast. Now that she was with him, she sensed her body weaken. With him she was always weak: a quiet girl far different from the Birdie Kiler folks at Firbank knew.

Her words were faint, hardly above a whisper.

"Honey, I had to see you. I've come to you."

"Did which?"

"I've come to you. I couldn't stay away no longer."

"You know damn well you *hain't left home?*" He drew his brows together in a hard frown.

Her head was lowered, her hands clasped. "I couldn't help it. They was goin' to make me marry Buck Humphries."

He drew closer to her.

"I love you, Luke. I got to have you," she said huskily.

He shook her roughly, his hard hands like nails biting into her shoulders. Whisky fumes were strong on his breath.

"You comin' down here when I got other troubles! I tole you to stay away from me! I tole you we'uns 'ud hafta keep this thing quiet! Now you've named hit to them and ruint us both."

She looked into his dull eyes, eyes bleared from overdrinking. Her olive skin was hot with throbbing blood. Her mouth was still open, her full lips wet and quivering. Her hair curled into her eyes.

"I ain't told them yore name. I love you. I had to find you." Her desperate tones rose from low in her throat.

His grizzly face was almost against hers. Veins like greasy red rivers interlined his eyeballs.

"I haint havin' no more of you now or no time, 'y God! Put that 'ere under yore belt and buckle hit down!"

"It's yore baby, Luke. It's yo'rn and mine." A feeling of misery assailed her.

"Hit ain't none of mine, you runnin' after ever' man in Neeley County! You'll git back home and marry Buck Humphries!"

She shook her head. "I cain't. I won't," she said hoarsely, decidedly. She didn't raise her voice.

"You won't skip hit. You've ruint my life, me tryin' to do right by ever'body. Now I got to take out fer Missouri or some'rs or nother till this here blows over."

She threw her arms around him, pressing herself hard against him. She held up her open mouth, striving to reach his. He tore away from her and knocked her down, his heavy fist crashing solidly on her cheek.

She lay quietly, not crying. Blood ran from her mouth in pinkish foam. She lay quietly in the dark decaying leaves watching him with wide childish eyes, staring, eating eyes.

He prodded her with his foot. "Git up and get gone! I hain't gonna be bushwhackered by no Bode Holey just because of you!"

She watched him, the man she desired and couldn't have, her eyes still longingly sinking into him.

He scowled down on her, not certain what to do next; thinking, "She's my sister's child, the daughter of old Squire Kiler, whose grandpaw was a buck nigger. I was a idiot to ever fool with her. She's purty as hell. There was something about her which tuck me in. I seen her grow up and seen how wild she was gittin'. When she come to my cabin, I just went crazy over her. I didn't have no idear she'd git to lovin' me with all them young fellers hangin' round. I broke her in and now she's follerin' me. I cain't git shut of her. I orght to of killed her fore this here ever come up."

She lay like a wounded animal. Her eyes were swimming

black to him. Her face faded in and out in distortion. His head was dizzy. He had drunk too much. He beat his fists against his temples. If he got too drunk, he knew Bode would have the advantage of him.

With one hand he jerked her to her feet. Her arms encircled him again. He tried to shake her loose. He cursed her. She pressed her open lips over his, drawing against them. In their struggle, they fell to the ground. Luke's head struck the edge of the stump. He lay still, she clasped to him. She stayed for minutes with her face against the matlike hair of his chest. She sat up and looked at him. He was unconscious. "He's nigh drunk too," she reasoned.

She sat motionless by him looking down on his dark face. Terrible thoughts came to her, thoughts of everything being finished for her.

"He won't have me. I'm lost now. He won't have none of me no more. He's through. I'm left with nothing. He set me afar and left me to burn up. They ain't gonna be no more bein' with him and knowin' his strength, lovin' and lovin'. Ever'thing's blowed up. But ain't nobody else gonna have him, I soundly know.

"I'll do it while he's out. I aimed to do it if he wouldn't have me. I thought hard on it for days and grew afeered. But I finally made up my mind to do it if he wouldn't have none of me."

Her razor was open in her hand. It glinted mirrorlike as a ray of the sun broke like a spear of gold through the canopy of leaves and vines.

She hadn't thought it could be done so easily. She found herself enjoying the doing of it. Blood darkened the blue of his shirt and ran sluggishly through the hairs of his chest.

She was relieved. No other woman could ever have him. He was dropped from her life, but she could live on nursing his memory.

She sat for a long time thinking of him as he had once been. She kept running a smeared hand through his tangled hair. She kissed his paling lips.

"I guess Bode Holley ain't needin' to see you now, honey," she

said tenderly. She laughed unnaturally, despairingly. "Yo're dead and don't know it. I'm kissin' you and you cain't help yorself."

A gray spider crawled onto Luke's face; carefully it stretched its legs as if measuring each step. She made no attempt to knock it off. She leaned over and cleaned the razor on wet moss.

The quiet of the woods startled her. She began to realize what she'd done. They would lynch her. She didn't care what happened just so she wasn't lynched. She didn't want a crowd watching her die.



She would have to hide the body, put it where nobody would ever find it.

In the rotting leaves by Luke's side, Birdie forced herself to study and study what to do with the stiffening body. One hand, flaked with drying blood, lay carelessly in Luke's coarse sunburned hair.

She couldn't recall the living Luke. This dead body was nothing which had ever been the Luke she had known. It was now a worry, something to hide away for protection of self. Her love, too, was forgotten with Luke's going. It had disappeared with him. Memory was connected with death. Fear remained, dumb fear.

The doing of the murder had been easy; the thinking of the doing, the realization of the deed, spread over her until she sat like a little child who has suddenly broken a cherished toy, the useless pieces scattered about her.

She attempted to brave herself by talking. "He's dead," she kept explaining. "And I done it. All that's him now is breathin' in me. He's went some'rs else. He wouldn't have me, so I sent him off nowheres that's knowed of."

Then she would try to play tricks on her actual knowing and pretend. "He's just asleep. He'll git up after while and put them big arms round me and hold me so clost I cain't git no air." She knew no strengthening at the weird idea.

Birdie had thought before today that nothing could ever separate them: God, man, nor the devil. Up in his cabin with him it was hard to think otherwise. She herself had brought the final separation. He would have no more of her. She had to wipe him out.

Now thoughts of her own safety outweighed thoughts of the gone Luke. She experienced no grief, only fear of discovery and increasing hate for all which had brought her to ruin.

"They'll lynch me for this. They'll git men and hounddogs and hunt me down. My ole pappy'll help them, cause they ain't nothin' he likes more'n a good lynchin'. They'll run a loop of rope over my head and pull me up to a limb. They'll yell and cuss and shoot a lot of lead into my body. They won't think of the baby. They'll kill it too."

A feeling of smallness, helplessness, pervaded her. She fought this off in the dread of things to happen.

She had to hide the corpse. The river was the best place, but she couldn't drag it that far. She cast about for another place. She saw a group of young holly trees, their leaves growing low and bunchy to the ground. She got to her knees. She was stiff and sore. The weight of the burden pulled her groundward.

She took Luke by one leaden arm and tried to move him. She tugged hard, only rocking his long heavy frame. She tried to drag him by the hair.

"He weighs a ton if he weighs a ounce," she gasped. "He's cheatin' me even now. He's dead, but he's still cheatin' me."

She fell across the body and breathed shortly. She got up at once, for the first time in fear of the dead man. She began piling leaves over him. She wished to get him out of her sight as soon as possible. She scooped up big handfuls of decayed leaves and poured them over his face. She rested and poured more.

She knew she'd never get him covered up this way. She needed a shovel or hayfork.

She heard the sound: distant, now nearer: a hoarse song falling through the entangled mass of vegetation. Soberly she made out the words:

"Oh, I was borned in Arkansas,
And I never knowed my paw;
I just growed up with swamps and rattlesnakes.

"I lived a decent life
Till I met my neighbor's wife;
I stayed at her house while he was away."

Stupidly Birdie listened, not wishing to bring herself to the thinking of who it was.

"I thought all was runnin' right
Till he caught me there one night;
An' that's why I left ole Arkansas."

"It's Bode!" she cried to the dead man. "He wouldn't be singin' if he wasn't drunk. He's licker-brave. He's comin' this-a-way!" She was wide awake to danger; thinking, "He'll find out I done the killin'."

She scooped more leaves over the body. She hadn't quite covered the face.

"Oh, they fired anvils when I run away;
Oh, they fired anvils when I run away;
Oh, they fired anvils when I run away;
Cause women hain't safe nowheres that I stay."

Birdie didn't see the bushes part behind her and the man peer out from a cave of leaves. She didn't wish to see. She knew he was there. She could hear him, almost imagine she smelled the whisky he was drinking: this was enough to hold her suspended in increasing dread.

Bode stepped out and swayed above her. She saw his leather boots, wet and shiny, specked with clinging trash. She knew it was Bode Holley. She rose slowly and brushed her hands tightly against her dress, standing guiltily. She twisted her neck and looked at him, all of him. One side of her face was swollen, bruised black where Luke had hit her. "I must make out I ain't skeered," she was telling herself. "I must keep hold of myself."

Bode Holley was very drunk. He was hatless, his cornsilk-colored hair damp and pasted in sweaty strips on his forehead. The yellow stubble of his face was dirt-smeared. In one hand, swinging carelessly, its barrel muddy, was a Marlin 30-30.

He stood weaving and pitching, trying to concentrate his gaze on the girl by closing one eye. He lopped his tongue across his salmon-pink lips. His skin was waxy: it looked as if it might break through his cheek bones. His overalls hung loosely on his weasly body.

"Hit's that damn Tolby," he said thickly, leering hard at the corpse. "You done killed him. Me huntin' and huntin' fer him and you done already killed him. Cheated me outta doin' hit." Even in his groggy state he experienced great relief at seeing Tolby dead. With Tolby gone he was brave.

Birdie's mouth was open and round. A nausea spread over her while she strove to face him calmly.

"I ain't done it, Bode Holley. I found him here. It's you was gunnin' for him. It's you shot him," she said weakly, a note of futility in her recrimination.

Bode laughed raucously. "Hit look like he done shot with a razor."

Her body was out of control. "It's you done it. It's you done it," she repeated mechanically. "You shot him in the back. You

was afeereder than hell of him." She tried to talk firmly, but her lips quivered.

"Think you kin dam'lie me cause I'm drunk, eh? They hain't no use denyin', Bird. I hain't tellin' on you. Glad the son of bitch's gone."

He attempted to walk to Birdie. He circled wide and fell flat on his face. He raised on one elbow, leaves sticking to his chin.

"Tha's all righ', Bird. Glad the bastard's dead."

"I love him more'n life," she mumbled absently.

Bode jerked his head back sharply to throw hair out of his eyes.

"I hain't surprised," he said. "Hit's a wonder you hadn't bin lovin' that 'ere sorry old pappy of yo'rn."

He sat up. "You wasn't barrin' nobody. And then you tried to stack hit off on a puny little boy like Buck Humphries."

He set his eyes greedily upon her, taking in the sinuous lines of her body where her wet dress stuck to her. "She's a beaut even if she is swole outa shape," he thought.

"Yo're a purty heifer, Bird," he said. "You was made for me. I'm wantin' a new woman. Me'n Lude's through."

She continued to glare down at him. "God," she thought. "I've shore reached the jumpin'-off place. Bode Holley's lower than 'ere nigger. Him tryin' to kill a man like Luke. Luke might be livin' now but for Bode Holley. I hoped I'd never see him agin."

Her eyes filled with loathing, hate.

He saw the quart of whisky on the stump. He crawled over and unscrewed the lid. "This here'll be the first and last thing Luke Tolby ever give me. The old peckerwood did make good drinkin' licker. I'll just have a puff to sober me up." He tilted the Mason jar to his lips and drank long and deep. "Good God from Gulfport, but this here's fine. Hit'd make a man burn his own barn."

Almost instantly he straightened up. The liquor cleared his head a little. He clambered to his feet and staggered to where Birdie was standing. He held the jar out to her. She backed from him.

"Look-a-here, Bird," he said seriously, new ideas coming to his belickered mind, "what you need's a little drink. Yore nerves is

shot. This cuttin' th'oats an' all has sorter fizzled you down. Take a swaller and you'll be settin' jake."

She pushed the jar away, her eyes on him sullenly.

"I ain't takin' nothin' from you now or no time, Bode Holley."

His face hardened. He leered at her through pale-lashed slitted eyes.

"Who misformed you on that?"

"I ain't takin' it," she said despairingly. "You out drunk killin' my man."

He caught her by the throat with one grimy hand. She fought, scratching and biting. He forced her head back. He pressed on her jaws to open her mouth. He held her rigidly, the jar to her lips. He poured her mouth full of the yellow fluid and held her until she swallowed. She sputtered, choked, her stomach regurgitating. The whisky ran onto the front of her dress, cooling her breasts, penetrating to her stomach. He let her catch her breath and poured her mouth full again. This time she swallowed most of it.

He threw her from him, cursing.

"I guess a little drink'll remine you who done the killin'," he growled.

She gasped, gagged, tried to vomit; but the spirits warmed her insides, entered her veins. Her entire body tingled. She felt better, of a sudden strong. She was more Birdie Kiler now.

"Feel better?" he asked.

"I shore-God do."

"I knowed you would."

"I want another hum in a minute."

"Let that-un git organized and we'll both take one. I don't want you to vomick on me. We got to throw Luke in the river."

"Will you reelly help me, Bode?"

"Yo're durn tootin' I will, Bird. Hain't nobody never gonna know who done hit."

Her eyes, wide and shining darkly, opaque, studied Bode somberly. There was no dullness in them now. She frowned at him

speculatively. Her lips were compressed with a certain sinister determination. This determination made her stronger every minute.

Bode wasn't looking at her. He fingered the quart and appeared to be figuring out something in his groggy mind.

They drank together, slapping and punching at each other, laughing loud echoing laughs. He was aware of the exuding heat from her young body through the thin dress. He pressed her breasts with rough, eager hands. He tried to kiss her. She pushed him away.

"We got to hide the body." She cast an oblique glance at him.

He grinned. "We shore have, now." He studied a minute. "We'uns had a good time oncet, Bird."

"Yes," she said flatly. "Yes, we did oncet." Talking as if her mind were far off from the river bottom.

On through the thickness of vines and bushes they pulled the heavy body of the dead Luke Tolby. Briars and thorns tore and scratched the pallid face.

At times they had to stop and rest, Birdie falling panting to the ground.

Then on toward the river.

They reached the willow-grown banks of the Forked Deer. The wet slime-covered remains of the tall Luke Tolby was slid down the slanting bank. It paused at the bottom of the bank, suspended for a moment, doubled, head between outspread legs. Bode pressed his boot against the drooping head and shoved hard. Without a sound the corpse was taken in, consumed and swept away by the rain-swelled current.

Bode sat down and held his head in his hands, shoulders swaying.

He's passed out, Birdie thought, as she saw Bode reel over into the stiff crabgrass and lie still. She bit her lips and the new feeling of strength came back to her. A strange smile exposed her even teeth. Her eyes were wider and darker, unmoving. She stared straight at him, then over him as though at something terrible, fascinating.

She walked toward him.

SNAIL PIE *

JAMES STILL (M.A.'30)

Though Mother's face was pale with anger, she didn't speak until Grandpaw Splicer and Leaf and I pushed back our plates. Grandpaw went to the barn to light his pipe, and Leaf followed to ask more about the rattlesnake steak Grandpaw claimed he ate once. I crawled under the house, squatting beneath the kitchen floor, listening. I had a mind to learn whether Father was going to tell of catching me chewing a wad of Old Nine. Mother was set as a wedge against tobacco. She wouldn't spare the limber-jim. I heard her heel strike the floor impatiently; I heard the rounds of Father's chair groan in the peg holes.

"Your step-paw's got to hush his lie-tales at the table," Mother said, her voice pitching high in her nose. "Since he's come to Mayho a meal's victuals haven't rested easy in my stomach. We ought to send him back to that county farm down in the Bluegrass."

"Forty years a drummer," Father said, "forty years of drumming mountain counties. He's too old to change his way." The leather of Father's cattle boots creaked. "Without a line o' big-eyed lies he couldn't have sold gnat balls and devil's snuff boxes. That's what he vows peddling. He's allus been a big hand to tease, and means no harm earthy."

"Every time he sticks his feet under the table it's pickled ants or fried snails. The name of snails I never could stand. Why, my innards turn at the word. And that pipe, foul as a pig pen. I told him straight off a whiff of tobacco sickened me. I warned him to keep it outside the house."

"Paw's a right smart company for the boys," Father said. He had saucered his coffee and was blowing across it. "Keeps them from underfoot; and it's got where I can go bird-hunting without

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them whining to track along. Oh, we oughtn't to work a hardship on the old man."

Mother's voice dropped from anger to dull complaint. "Old and doty and childish, worse'n any chap. Why, he might even teach the boys to smoke tobacco. I'm bound they'll not get the habit. I can't get Todd to say what he talks about to them, but Leaf did once. He told an awful thing about a mole."

"Oh, I figure he keeps a good eye on the chaps. You'd not know they're wormy if Paw hadn't found out. He offered to roust some boneset leaves to rid 'em."

"I'm no witch to begin brewing herb tea," Mother said. "You buy a bottle of vermifuge."

"Come spring," Father said, "Paw can hoe the garden. Nothing will fight weeds like an old man. I thought I'd pay him a mite to keep him in heart."

"We promised to try him for one month," Mother said. "One month, and not a day beyond." Her words were cold and level. "Three weeks he's been here, and it's moles, slugs, or fish bait three times a day. I say you've got to speak to him. He'll quieten or go back to that county farm. The next time he mentions snails—"

Father clapped his empty saucer against the table top. "You oughtn't to be so finicky," he blurted. He shoved his chair back and got up. I heard dishes clink fit to break. "I hate like rip to call the old man down. I hate to."

"If you'd heard what he told Leaf," Mother quarreled, her voice rising, for Father's hand was twisting the door knob. "If you'd heard!"

Father slammed the door so fiercely the skillets rattled behind the stove.

I hurried from under the house and ran to the barn. Leaf stalked the calf lot on johnny-walkers Grandpaw Splicer had chopped for him. Grandpaw sat in the crib whittling a cob, and smoking and chewing. He was shaping a new pipe bowl with his barlow knife.

"Grandpaw," I said, "you never did tell me about that mole."

Grandpaw Splicer's eyes rounded, questioning. "Mole?" he asked.

"You told Leaf," I reminded, acting slighted.

"Ah, yes," Grandpaw said, "what some fellers done with a mole varmint." He blew a tobacco cud out of his mouth onto a shuck. He knocked pipe ashes into a crack. Then he opened his mouth suddenly, drawing his tongue back. "Be-jibs," he said, "I've lost another tooth." He spied into the shuck, and there it was. He drew the false plate forth into his hand. "I need me a new set o' teeth, but I've got no money. It'd take many a frog skin. Afore long I'll have to gum victuals."

"I heard Pap say he was aiming to pay you a wage," I said. "I did, now."

"Ah," Grandpaw said. The blue flects in his eyes shone. "Ah!" He pitched the tooth into a bag of seed corn. "Thar's one grain never'll sprout." He began to whack the cob nub. A kink of smoke twisted from his pipe and the crib filled with the mellow smell of tobacco, ripe and sweet and burning.

I watched the shaping of the cob, drawing in deep breaths of burnt tobacco. "Grandpaw," I said, "I'd give a pretty if you was making that 'un for me."

Grandpaw grunted, clicking his teeth plates. "I knowed of a baby once was larnt to smoke in the cradle. Ruther to draw on a pipe than his mammy's breast. Gee-o, if that little 'un didn't grow up six feet two."

"I been smoking a spell," I confessed.

Grandpaw chuckled. "I figured hit was you slobbered on my pipe stem yesterday. That's why I'm whittling this new 'un."

"Be it for me?" I questioned, hoping.

"Now, no," Grandpaw said, "your mommy hates tobacco like the Devil hates Sunday. She'd hustle me back to that county farm 'gin sundown. But if they comes a time you're bound to smoke, jist steal this new 'un. Never wanted another using my reg'lar."

The bowl of the pipe was nearly finished. Only the dried marrow of the cob lacked scraping.

"Grandpaw," I said, "I'm scared you're a-going to be sent back. I heard Mommy a-talking."

"Hark!" Grandpaw said. He put the barlow down slowly. His face clouded with wrinkles and worry. "Was hit that mole tale?"

"Not square all," I said. "Hit, and some more."

The cob rolled to the crib floor. Grandpaw dipped into the seed corn, filling the pan of his hand with grains, lifting, pouring. His lower lip stuck out blue and swollen, the gray bag of his chin quivered. "Todd," he spoke, "you tell me what your mommy said, and I'll chop you a pair o' johnny-walkers."

"I choose that pipe," I bargained.

"Ruther to die than go back," Grandpaw moaned. "Folks thar perished already, jist won't give up and lay down. Coffin boxes waiting in the woodshop. Hit's cruel. Cruel like what fellers done with a mole once." His eyes dampened, his hands shook, scattering the corn. "You know what fellers done? Started a mole in a bull yearling. That bully run a mile, taking on terrible, and fell down stone dead."

"I'll keep that pipe 'tater holed. Nary an eye'll tech it."

"I long to stay on here."

I peeked through the crib cracks to see that no one was near. Leaf tramped the far side of the lot on his walkers. I told Grandpaw what Mommy had said. He listened, an arm elbow deep in the corn sack. "Never tell Leaf a grain o' nothing," I warned him at the end. "He's bad to talk. Jist six, and don't know no better. And nary a word o' snails."

"I'll play quiet-Bob," Grandpaw said. "Aya gonnies, I will."

We heard Leaf coming on his johnny-walkers, crockety-crock. He stuck his head in through the door. "Grandpaw," he called, his mouth curling with mischief, "did you ever eat a horse apple?"

On Saturday Father went bird-hunting, and there were quails' breasts for dinner, and gravy brown as cracklings. We sat at the table watching Mother cut the breasts in half. She served her plate and passed the dish. Leaf and I had been starved for two days,

having taken the vermifuge Thursday and forbidden to eat a bite since. We could hardly wait longer. Our stomachs were empty jugs.

Father grinned at the dish of fried breasts. Four were no larger than a child's fist. His jaws set with pride. He had brought down three birds with one shot, bagged nine altogether; and he had prepared them too, for Mother would never clean a fowl. He glanced at Grandpaw, seeking a good word for his prowess. "Three with one shot," Father bragged. "Three, now."

Grandpaw's teeth clicked. His lower lip puckered, and I knew he'd thought of a thing to tell. He raised grizzly eyebrows, wondering if he dared.

"One plummet, three bobs," Father said. "That's no fish tale." His mouth clacked with hunger. "Ever see such mud-fat ones?"

"Hit was quare how I killed a bob-white once," Grandpaw said. He spoke slowly, picking his words. "Years ago when I lived in the head o' Jumpup Holler I went a-fishing on Shikepoke Creek. Caught so plagued many I had no place a'tall to put 'em. Jist shucked my breeches, tied knots in the leg-ends, and filled 'em topful o' the prettiest redeyes and big-mouths. So many fish I packed, a button popped off, and be-dabs if hit didn't kill a bob-white."

"Sounds like truth to me," Father laughed. He winked at Mother. She had stopped eating, uncertain; then she took a big bite. Mother did mortally like partridges.

Leaf spoke, his mouth full, swallowing. "Grandpaw, where's Jumpup Holler? I be to go thar."

"Ah," Grandpaw said. He poked his lip out so far it seemed bee-stung. "Why, hit's so far backside o' nowhere folks have to use possums for yard dogs and owls for roosters."

"I bet that hain't the truth," Leaf said.

"Swear to my thumb to my dum," Grandpaw said.

"I know me a tale and hit shore happened," Leaf said. The spark of his eyes lit. He glanced at me and Grandpaw. I got a grain fidgety. Leaf was bad to tittle-tattle.

"Truth?" Mother asked doubtfully. "Truth will keep without salt. Rest your tongue." And she served her plate again.

"Ah," Grandpaw said, thinking back into his head for another tale. "I wasn't allus good times in Jumpup Holler. Once a hard winter come. Ninety days snowfall, ninety days stripping zero. Well, now, I give out o' bread and I give out o' meat. Not a lick o' sweetening in the 'lassy barrel. Not a speck o' nothing to eat the size o' the chinebone of a gnat."

Mother laid her fork by uneasily, waiting. Her mouth was full, but she didn't swallow. I tried to catch Grandpaw's eye. He paid me no mind. He lifted a hand, laying off this story-piece. I tried to poke him with a foot under the table.

"Well, now," Grandpaw went on, "I got my old hog-rifle and searched the woods over. Not a sight o' beast or varmint I had. Then I looked into the sky roof, and by jukes if thar wasn't a buzzard flying. I took a hair aim, fetched him down at one crack, and 'gin to rip the feathers."

Father opened his mouth to laugh, but Mother stared angrily at him. She had paled; her lips were tight against her teeth. Father made a breathy gulp. I slid low in my chair and kicked Grandpaw's knee. He grunted. He glanced at me in a way to tell me he was being careful.

"Did you cook that thar buzzard?" Leaf asked.

"Now, no," Grandpaw replied. "I gethered the hungry smell out o' the meat box, mixed it with frost bite, and fried it with a smidgen o' axle grease. Hit made good victuals too."

Mother swallowed at last. She stared into her plate at a baby partridge's breast. I felt better, though I wished Grandpaw had played quiet-Bob as he'd promised.

"I know me a tale," Leaf said, "and hit's truth. I be to tell."

"Truth?" Mother asked sharply.

"Gourd-head and tell," Father joked. I could see he was glad Grandpaw hadn't eaten that buzzard.

"Be sure it's truth," Mother warned, her voice pitching high and thin. "We could do with a dust of honesty."

Grandpaw lifted his chin. He was a bit anxious.

"Hit was this morning," Leaf began. "That thar worm medicine was retching my innards."

Mother grasped the table top. Her knuckles grew white and bloodless; her face turned the color of dough.

"I went running behind the barn," Leaf said, "and thar was Grandpaw Splicer and Todd a-smoking. Todd smoking a cob pipe Grandpaw made for him, a-blowing smoke big as Ike Pike. I be to have me a pipe too."

Grandpaw's chin quivered. His shoulders sagged, and he leaned forward, his eyes watering. Drips ran along the webbed wrinkles of his cheeks. He seemed old, old.

Leaf stared and hushed, suddenly regretting having told. He couldn't think why Grandpaw Splicer wept. His lips trembled. "Grandpaw," he said, trying to patch the hurt, "did you ever eat a snail pie?"

PA WENT A-COURTING

MILDRED HAUN (B.A.'35, M.A.'37)

Ad Kanipe (born January 1, 1847)

My writing looks as different from Ma's as a cow's path does from a guinea's path. But of course it was my place to put her name down here. And it was the only thing she ever asked me to do. "Amy," she said to me one day, "if anything should ever happen to me, I want you to take care of the Family Bible and keep the record up." So I scribbled her name here. Mary Dorthula Kanipe, October 15, 1939. And now I've got to write Pa's name in. I'll put it right under Ma's. Ad Kanipe, October 1, 1940. He might not care to have it in the Family Record. But Ma would want it there and still want me to keep the Bible from the antiquers. I have been careful with it. Even from Pa, I kept it hid. But he might have set something a store by it too. At the last, he might. There's no telling.

I always thought Pa was a good man at heart. All he needed was somebody to make it come out. And I guess Ma just about did that at last. I don't see why she didn't do it before she left here. Then all them men wouldn't have been laying for him. But it seemed like she never did addle her brain much over the things he did. She always tried to shield him. Of course, she shielded him this time too. But she scared him first. That was what did him good.

Folks said even at Ma's funeral Pa was glancing around at other women. Barty Franklin just swears he seed him grin at that old Tempton girl. I don't know about that. But I do know he begun trying to court again before the dirt was settled on Ma's grave. He tried to go with Rhotanna Courtney. But Rhotanna give him to understand right now that she didn't want anything to do with an old broke-down ground hog that had one foot in the grave. Looks like that would have set him to thinking. But it didn't.

Then Pa went to hanging around Zach McClann's. All them girls had been no-account. And he started going with the one called Trulie. She was that big old fat sloppy one. Pa went plumb hog wild. As old as he was. He took her to meeting and poke suppers and everything that come along. Everybody knowed all the time what was going on. And some folks allowed Zach would put a stop to it.

Finally Trulie found out she wasn't getting much money out of Pa and she started carrying on with Roy Goolen. Pa went all to pieces. He run around here like a fitified pup. And it seemed to me like his lips got thinner every day. He wouldn't open his mouth to answer anybody when they spoke to him. And you know how thin his lips always were? Well, they got so you couldn't tell he had any mouth. It just looked like a split place across his face. He would squint up his eyes and cock his head over sideways even more than general. He got just plumb quare-looking.

I dreaded to have to look at him. But, you see, after Ma died him and Linus moved over here to Sugar Creek. They didn't much want to come to Hamblen County, but they didn't have anybody to cook for them and they moved in with me and Enzor. Enzor wanted them too. He said he was going to try to get a little work out of some of the Kanipes. I knowed all the time it would give Enzor more room to fuss at me about things if they come. But, of course, we had enough room for them. We didn't have anything at all up in the loft, and we never did use that little back room for anything save plunder. It is just a little old lean-to that Enzor's pa had built on to the log part a short while after me and Enzor got married. And it wouldn't have been right not to ask them to come.

But for a whole week Pa acted quare that away. I couldn't get him to eat anything hardly. And every time I said anything he would either snap me off right short, or just not answer at all. I sort of got tired of it. But Enzor he didn't pay it much heed. He just kept throwing it up to me that none of my folks were any account.

Pa kept on acting that way till one day he went somewheres. And when he come in that night one whole side of his face was skinned up like a willow tree. And his right eye was big enough for two eyes. He looked like he was ashamed for me to see him. And he wouldn't say ne'er a word about what had took place.

But Enzor heard it on him the next day. It was all over the country, of course, about how he had picked a racket with Roy Goolen and how Roy had jumped on him and just about beat him to death. Roy still wasn't through with him either. He allowed as how he was going to send him to his resting place some day.

For several days after that Pa shied around from folks like a shot deer. Then he got so he just held his head up and went on as if nothing had took place. Folks teased him about it but he got so he could turn the jokes off pretty well. He talked to me real solemn about it one day. Before he started out that day, something told him not to go. Hit seemed like he could hear a voice telling him something was going to happen to him.

But after he seed there wasn't any use of trying Trulie McClann any longer he took up with Lula Mai Johnkin. He sold off some lumber on Ma's place and spent money in a big fashion after that. He bought him a suit of clothes and strutted around bragging about getting younger and younger every day he lived. He even tried to borrow some money from Enzor. And, of course, that give Enzor a chance to fuss at me some more.

And Pa told it, or it got around somehow, all over the country that him and Lula Mai were going to get married. I believe he thought they were too, because he kept talking about moving back into his new house with a new old woman—one that was young enough this time to outlast him. He said the last one was wore out before he married her. He would get as mad as a hornet every time anybody named Lula Mai. He wouldn't be jested about her at all. She was a nice girl, he told everybody, just as nice as anybody that talked about her.

But finally one day he dyked out in his suit of clothes and everything and he left home. He hollered back at me and said he would

be an' old married man when he got back. I didn't give him any answer because I didn't know whether he was jesting or not. But I guess he thought he was a-going to get her.

That night, a little before sundown, Pa come a-creeping up the hollow. I was milking, and I seed him coming. Hit skeered me half to death because I never had seen him look so old and humped before. He was bent away over and moseying along like dead lice were dropping off him. He went on into the house. I didn't finish milking. I just milked out enough for supper and got on to the house as soon as I could.

I didn't see him anywhere when I got here so I went on in the back room where his bed was. And he was stretched out across it with his face buried down in the feather tick. "Are you sick, Pa?" I asked him. "Hell, no," was all the answer he made me. He didn't come to the table for supper and I went in there and ast him if he wanted me to bring it to him. He said he didn't want any because he hadn't felt hungry all day. He didn't come to the breakfast table the next morning either.

Linus and Enzor went to the mill up at Slop Creek that morning and they heard all about what had caused Pa to act that way. Lula Mai had married a Susong boy Sunday morning. And Pa went all the way up there to see her Sunday evening. The Old Man Johnkin met him at the door and told him to come in. He went in and set there for a right smart span of time. Then finally, the Old Man told around, Pa upped and asked where Lula Mai was. And the Old Man said, "She got married to Bill Susong this morning. They got Square Anderson to marry them." The Old Man told him Bill and Lula Mai had gone over in Hancock County to live with Bill's folks. But Pa, he wouldn't believe it till he went and asked Square Anderson.

Pa just about wasted away after that. There was a month that he didn't eat scarcely anything. And he fell off till he looked like a birch sapling with britches on. I was plumb uneasy about him. A lot of folks talked it around that he was nigh dead with consumption.

Then he told me one day, real sheepish-like, that on his way over to Johnkins that Sunday evening he kept thinking he heard that voice in his ears. But he didn't pay much attention to it at the time.

He got over that spell too and finally got so he could almost stand to be teased about Lula Mai. But he threatened around that some of these days he aimed to have it out with Bill Susong.

Then he took up with Tiny Samples. Tiny was a shy-pokey-looking little old gal without good sense. She was just fifteen year old and lived over there close to the Hog Pen church house. Pa always went to protracted meetings. Me and Enzor went over there to Hog Pen some and I recollect naming it to Enzor one day how Tiny was a-feisting around every man and boy she seed. I told him she would get out with the first boy that paid her any mind.

Then that last meeting started. Me and Enzor didn't go more than once a week, because Enzor was afraid the preacher man would speak to me. But Pa, he went every night and even took to going in daytime. I noticed how big a splut he was always in to get ready every night. But I didn't think about who he was in such a hurry to see.

One day, during the time the meeting was going on, Eva Day stopped in here from on her way to the store and she asked me what I thought about my future step-mammy. I didn't know what she meant. She told me Pa had started courting Tiny Samples. I didn't believe it. I thought he would think more of himself than that. So I didn't say anything to Enzor about it.

That night I told Enzor I was going to meeting. Of course, he wouldn't let me go unless he went too. At the supper table I told Pa we were going with him. And he didn't say a word. As soon as supper was over he jumped up and lit out like a dog after a fox. Enzor told him to wait and we would go with him. But he didn't even let on like he heard.

Me and Enzor were late. And we had to set on the back seat. My eyes nearly popped out of my head when I seed it. I still tried not to believe it but right there in front of us set Pa and Tiny

Samples all wropped up around one another as much as they could be without just being on top of one another. They set there that way all during the singing when everybody else was standing up. He had his right leg kind of wropped around her left leg and he had his arm around her.

Then the preacher man prayed and instead of closing my eyes and bowing my head, I watched Pa and Tiny. They just felt all over one another. Nobody on that seat or on the one I was setting on heard e'er word the preacher prayed. We all just set there and stared at Pa and Tiny. I didn't look anybody in the face for I was too ashamed. I reckon Pa thought everybody was supposed to have his eyes shut and his head down. Him and Tiny were just a show for everybody that could see them, and I seed folks from up in front looking back toward them during the while the preacher man was preaching.

Enzor got mad at Pa and said it was just in all the Kanipes to carry on that way—even in the women, he said. He give Pa a good cussing out that night when he got in. But it didn't do one speck of good. He just kept right on. Everybody in the whole country got to talking about it. It's a wonder they didn't cowhide Pa. But the menfolks mostly just laughed about it and the womenfolks all whispered in one another's ears and said an old dog like that ought to be cut.

He went on the same way for nigh two month and I was scared out of my senses nearly all the time, afeared something was going to happen. I just kept having an uneasy feeling every time I even thought about it.

But it all ended one night. Pa got so he went to see Tiny every Sunday. He stayed all day and got in about midnight Sunday night. He had left that morning just like he always did on Sunday except he stood out there in the yard for a few minutes before he left. He kept his head down and appeared to be gazing at the ground. Then he told Enzor that he thought he eat too much supper the night before, because sometime in the night he thought he heard somebody a-hollering to him. And then he thought he

could feel hands on his shoulder and it seemed like they were pressing against him.

Enzor told him he had better take warning, for if he didn't he was going to keep on till he had to take Tiny. He took umbrage at what Enzor said. He stiffened up again and allowed he couldn't do better than to get her. I just kept my mouth out of it and didn't say anything one way or tother.

We didn't look for Pa in that night till after midnight, just like always, you know. But along sometime in the night—a right smart span before midnight too—the dogs jumped out and I never heard such barking in all my life. Me and Enzor both went a-running to the door.

The moon was shining just a little and I seed somebody coming just a-picking up his heels like he was running from hell-fire. Enzor hollered at the dogs but they didn't pay him any heed. They went running right on up to the man. But when they got right up to him they stopped, so I knowed it was Pa. Well, he never did slow up one bit. It just took him about two leaps to get through the yard onto the porch. I could hear him breathing by the time he got to the edge of the yard. Sounded like a dying bull. I was still standing in the door, and if I hadn't dodged out of the way he would have runned right smackdab over me. But I jumped back real quick.

He went through the big house and into the back room. He shut the door and I heard him latch it. It has got one of these-here stable latches on it, but I reckon that was the first time that door was ever latched. I could still hear him breathing. I tried to get in the room but of course I couldn't. Then I heard him pull the window down and heard him hammering in there so I knowed he was trying to nail the window. I didn't sleep any scarcely the whole night because I feared he would smother, being so out of breath and then shutting everything up airtight.

The next morning he hollered and told me to bring his breakfast to him. So I did. He was as wild-looking as a rabbit. He was still shaking all over like a cold dog and he told me if anybody come

a-hunting for him for me to tell them he wasn't here. He wanted me to tell them he went away Sunday morning and hadn't got back yet. I heard him fasten the door behind me when I went out.

He stayed there all day without getting out. I took his dinner and supper both to him. That night, after it got good and dark he got up and went out in the yard for a little while. Then he went right back into the back room and fastened himself up again. He done that way for three days. I didn't know what to make of it.

But finally, one day, he got a letter. It come down to Fawvers' and they brung it up here. I took it in the room there to him, and I come on back out. He stayed around the house pretty close the next two or three days. Then he got so he went around over the place with Enzor just like he always had done. But one day Enzor was over there at the barn and he found that letter where Pa had lost it out of his pocket. Of course, it did Enzor good to find something he could fuss at me about. He picked the letter up and brung it to the house. He laid it up on the black bureau so I just picked it up and read it. Hit said:

"Hello, Dern Sweetheart,

"They hain't done nothing to me at all. They hain't done nothing save cuss you. And they aim to kill you someday. But noways shortly. They know some other folks that will want to have a hand in it. I hate Pa caught us. But he just said there wasn't anything else he could do save to make us marry. And he didn't want me to do that, and I don't either. And Ma said that wasn't her we seed come out there before Pa did. You know, I told you I thought that didn't look like her. So Pa didn't come out there, because Ma had told him we were talking low. There is something quare about it. Pa said something just told him to walk around the chimney corner at that time. They hain't even whupped me.

"Tiny."

I thought it was plumb funny, her calling him "dern sweetheart" when everybody in the country knowed how they were carrying on. And I hoped that would be enough to break Pa. I thought for a while it had. He appeared so different for the next two or three weeks. Seemed so quiet and everything. Everybody wondered

and wondered what could be the matter between him and Tiny. But nothing was ever said about it in any way. I don't reckon Samples ever told anybody and Pa never did, so it didn't get spread about. It soon blowed over, or I thought it did. But it seems like he just had to learn his lesson. Ma had been dead nigh a year now.

There were two old women that lived out there at Russellville. They were regular old whores—as ugly as mud pies. And the men that runned after them called one of them number 1, and the other one number 2. Pa, he took up with old number 2. She had been staying out there with Ike Lame. And I think Ike was about to run out of anything to pay her with. She had an old broke-down car she run around in. So Pa would even brag about being hauled around in a car. Folks said Ike didn't much like it at first when old number 2 took up with Pa. But I think she spent part of her time with Ike and part of it with Pa.

Pa would meet her down at the road every night. That just kept going on and on. Then Pa took a mortgage on the place over there in Cocke County and old number 2, of course, knowed he had that money and she set out to get it. He had kept all Ma's things locked up over there in the house—all the canned fruit and everything. I hadn't needed it and he kept on saying he was likely to get him another old woman and move back over there most any time.

One day, after he had been running around with that old number 2 for about three weeks, he just upped and left here. I didn't know what had become of him till the next day I heard that him and old number 2 had moved into the house over in Cocke County. I thought shore they were married, but folks said they weren't. She was just living over there with him to do his cooking for him. At least, that is what he made out like. He had started buying things on credit at the Silver City store house. And he had all that money he had borrowed too. I didn't do or say anything about it. He come over here after Old Heif. I just asked him if he got enough to eat and he said that he ought to, he had the best cook this side of Creation.

I heard from them every day or two. Everybody that knowed Pa talked something terrible about the way he did. And folks allowed Ike Lame would get him sooner or later too. Things went on that way for about nine days. And it was the ninth night that started Pa thinking.

Hit was a good while after midnight that the dogs went to barking here. They rared out big. I heard Pa speak to them. I didn't know what to think. Well, he come on in the house and Enzor got up and lit the lamp. Pa was as pale as a slate rock. He looked worse scared this time than he did the time Samples run him in. "Who's after you, Pa?" I asked him. He looked at me like the lightning had struck him. "Granny," he said. "Granny is after me." You know, that is what he always called Ma. He motioned for Enzor to shut the door, and then he set down there in that corner. It was the furtherest away from the lamp. I thought he was going to die before he could tell it. But he got it all out.

Him and number 2 had been sleeping together every night. She always got through and got in the bed first. Then he got in. This time she had got in and kept telling him to come on, but somehow or nother he just didn't have any hankering to get in the bed. And once he thought about just telling number 2 he was tired of such doings, and that it was time for her to go back to Russellville. But then he thought he wouldn't.

He said he kept fooling around there till he guessed a quarter of the night had passed away. Then he just blowed out the light all of a sudden and jumped in. He didn't notice anything odd when he first got in. But he reached over for number 2. And he noticed she felt mighty light and soft as she rolled over closer to him. Just about that time he heard number 2 say, "Hain't you going to love me any tonight?" He said he never had such a quare feeling in all his life. But he thought right quick, and he thought maybe he had the quilt in his arm. So he just answered back to number 2, "I thought I had you in my arms."

"You have got me," he heard Ma say right in his ear. It was Ma's voice just as clear as a whistle. He started to jump out of the

bed, but Ma just rose right up over him and he couldn't move. So he laid there without saying a word.

Number 2, she begun wanting to know what it was, and she riz up in bed to see. Then she went to screaming. "Who is she? What is it? Ad, hit's an old woman." Ma never did say a word to number 2. She just talked to *him*. Number 2 grabbed the pillow and throwed it at Ma, but the pillow landed over on the floor



and appeared to have gone right through Ma without ever teching her.

Then Pa felt Ma get back over in the bed between them, and felt her pull the quilt up around her shoulders. He riz up in bed too. There was number 2 setting up over on one railing of the bed and him on tother. He was afeared to look at the bed but something kept telling him to go on and look. So his head finally just turned that way.

And there was Granny laying there just as plain as the nose on your face. He thought she was a little palish-greenish looking the best he could make out, not having any light. But she was there and he could see her head and he could hear her breathing just

like she always done. He started to climb out of bed again. When he did he felt her pulling him back. "Who is it?" number 2 kept wanting to know. "Hit's Granny," Pa told her. "Just like she was—it's her." Then Ma turned her head over toward number 2. Pa knowed Ma must have looked right straight at her because he was watching number 2. And she just looked like a scared guinea. Then she jumped out of the bed and yelled.

Pa, he started to get up and see which way number 2 was going but he felt a hand on him pulling him back. The hand was on his shoulder pulling him, and yet he looked and Granny was still laying right there not moving or anything save just breathing.

Pa laid there for what seemed to him like all of Forever. But directly he heard the roosters begin crowing, and he seed Granny get up and back out the door. When she got in the door she said, "I'll be back, Ad." And she went on out the door as natural as a duck.

Pa was about half scared to death when he got here and by the time he got the whole tale told he was scared worse. He was shaking all over like a leaf in the wind. He wanted to know if I would sleep in the back room and let him sleep with Enzor. I told him I would and I went on back there and slept for the rest of the night. Nothing didn't happen.

All the next day Pa looked scared. But he laid around and slept most of the day. Me and Enzor, we got to talking about it. And I told Enzor that I didn't believe Ma had come back here to earth. I didn't believe dead folks could come back. I just allowed Pa's conscience had got to hurting him because he was running with that old woman since Ma died. Enzor said he didn't know. So I just didn't think much more about it.

That night Pa set around like he hated to go to bed, but me and Enzor went on and crawled in and just acted like nothing uncommon had took place. Finally Pa went on to bed in the back room. He tried to make Linus come down out of the loft and sleep with him, but Linus wouldn't do it.

I had got to sleeping sound when I heard Pa holler out like a

buzzard had him. I jumped up and went running in there. Pa was jerking the cover up over his head. All of a sudden I looked at the foot of his bed. There stood Ma. And Ma looked plumb pretty. She was standing there looking right at Pa's head. She had on some kind of a thin, loose robe sort of thing. It was a kind of a whitish thing that looked like a green light was shining on it. And her hair was hanging down like it always did when she was combing it. I stood there and looked at her for a right smart span, but she was just gazing at Pa. She didn't seem to notice that I was in the room. I listened to see if I could hear Enzor getting up and I didn't.

So I just said to myself, "Hit is Ma. She is here and I am going to speak to her. She won't harm me." I pulled myself together and I said, "Ma, hit's you. What are you doing here?"

"Hit's you, Amy," she said, and she turned around toward me. Her whole body turned when her head turned. She looked right at me. I could see her eyes and they sparkled like they always did. "I just come back to warn Ad," she said. "That woman was planning on running away with all the money he had and all my quilts and things too. She was aiming on getting what few things I had left from the antiquers. She was aiming on doing it tonight. I just thought I had better put a stop to it while I could. She was going to take them up to Ike Lame's."

"Hain't you peaceful, Ma?" I asked her. "Where are you?"

"I am in a world of Spirits," she said. "Spirits. Spirits. All I ever see is Spirits. And I get so tired of Spirits. I want to come back once in a while and straighten out things. I see everything that goes on and I want to help. I wanted to come down here and run that woman away. But I am at peace."

Then she walked up to the head of Pa's bed. "I'll come one more time before you die, Ad," I heard her say. And I never did see her any more. I didn't see her leave. "Ma," I said, and I kept on hollering for her. "She's gone, Pa," I told him. And I went on back to bed.

Pa, he got up the next morning and come to breakfast. He didn't

look scared but he looked like he was in a deep study about something. He set out here on the back porch for a right smart while after breakfast. Then he got up and went walking off.

I didn't see him any more till after sundown that night. I was worried to death when he didn't come in to dinner. But along a little after sundown that evening he come a-moseying in. I looked at him and I didn't know what in the name of Creation to think. He was as pale as a berry blossom. And yet he looked different somehow. He didn't look bothered about anything. I didn't know what to make of it, so I just ended up by asking him where he had been all day.

He said he was a changed man. He started out to walking that morning and every step he took he heard a voice calling to him. But he wasn't able to make out what the voice was saying. He tried to keep right on going and not give it any heed, but he couldn't because every step he took it kept calling to him. He just kept on walking. He didn't know why nor where he had started. But by the time he got down there to the Headed Woods he was about half give out. And for some reason he turned there and went on up the rail fence till he come to that reed patch. Something just made him set down there, and he kept hearing that voice over and over. He said it sounded just like Ma did that night. Once or twice he started to run, but he knowed there wasn't any use in that for the voice come to him as much one place as it did another.

While he was setting there he went back over his whole life, how he had treated Ma and all. And every time he thought of something he had done, he could smell sulphur a-burning. And meat of some kind. Then a hot flash went all over his body and he thought he was on fire. Just about that time he got up on his knees. He never had prayed and he didn't know how, but he just went over all the low-down things he had done. And he burnt with shame when he thought of the Lord knowing all them things.

Once, while he was on his knees there, everything sort of went blank for a minute, and he seed Roy Goolen and Old Man Samples

come up to him from one side and Bill Susong and Ike Lame from tothern. It seemed like they grabbed him and throwed him off some kind of big cliff. He said it seemed like it took him forever to fall, and while he was falling he could see a big fire below him. And he could feel bolts of lightning going through his whole body.

That falling feeling made him sick as a poisoned rat, and he puked all over the ground there. He thought sure he was a goner but he just said out loud, "Lord, I hain't never going to do ne'er a nother thing wrong." Then he said he had the quarest feeling. His body felt so good all over that he could feel his flesh tingling. Like it does when a body is about half drunk—plumb good. And he knowed then he was a changed man.

That night, again sometime in the night, I woke up and I heard Pa a-talking. I didn't know what to make of it. I thought he was talking in his sleep. So I slipped out of bed again, and slipped in the back room.

There stood Ma at the foot of the bed, and she was looking square dab at Pa. Pa, he was sort of raised up on his elbow, and I heard him say, "I guess they'll get me, but I feel content now." And Ma, she just walked up to the head of his bed and I seed her lean over and kiss him right on the lips.

THE CAPTAIN'S HOUSE, IT WAS IN THE TANYARD HOLLER

ETHEL MOORE (B.A.'43)

I don't never put much stock in what folks says, but I couldn't help listening when they commenced to talk about Lula Johnson. I reckon it's just the old Devil in me that I never liked her. I thought a heap of the Captain, though; they lived neighbors to us in the Tanyard Holler. I mind how we used to go down there of an afternoon—my sister Mamie and me.

Captain Blades, he didn't have but one leg. He lost one in the war. We used to beg him to tell us where was the fighting at that he lost it in. But he would just grin behind that white mustache and say he couldn't tell because he was ashamed before God and man to leave a leg to the Yankees. We always figured it was at some fight where his side won. Seems like I just never could imagine the Captain running from nobody.

The longest day I live I never will forget how he used to set in that old rocker under the big gray beech tree in the yard a-facing the house. Most folks would have set so they could have seen the road, but the Captain wanted to look at his house. I never seen nobody set such store by a house. My Pa always said it were sinful to love anything earthly that way. He said folks shouldn't "lay up treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break through and steal." He thought a heap of the Captain, Pa did, but Pa was a mighty religious man. They used to set and talk of a Sunday when there wasn't no preaching till it was nigh dark.

Pa used to talk to him about them mansions in Heaven, and the Captain seemed like he was grinning and he'd say he didn't reckon the Lord figured his house was no mansion. He reckoned the Lord didn't care for him having a shelter over his head. Pa always said the things of this old earth wasn't meant to last. "The dust returnth to dust," he'd say. "That's the Lord's will." Pa thought

God was sure to visit His wrath on folks that didn't pay heed to the Bible.

But I never could feel hard at the Captain about his house. I reckon it wasn't no mansion, but it sure was the prettiest house in the Holler. It was painted white, and it was two stories high. It was built on a little knoll just an easy distance from the road. There were four white columns in front that held up the second floor porch roof. The Captain had green shutters that really opened and closed at every window in the house. The windows were broad and there was a fan-shaped one over the front door. There was a door knocker on that door that he brought from Atlanta once. Little Bigby Creek run along by the Captain's place, but it crossed the road just above his house and went down back of the Negro church. That's where the darkies have foot-washings, in that creek.

I mind how the Captain looked setting there in his big rocker with little lion heads on the posts at each side of his head. He sure was a big man. His eyes were real bright blue and it seemed like he was grinning at you lots of the time, but you couldn't generally tell because that mustache hid his mouth. When I was real little, he used to set me on his knee and I'd put my feet where his other knee ought to have been. I could set there for hours listening to him tell tales. I mind one he used to tell about an old Negro church near Campbellsville that burned down. The Negroes was having a meeting and one night after they had had a special big crowd and there had been lots of shouting and praying, the church burned down. But the Bible was open on the pulpit and it didn't burn a mite. I reckon that was the way God willed it.

I guess the reason I recollect that so well is because from where we was sitting, we could see the church across the road and I used to wonder if the Bible would stay there if that church burned. I used to be the scaredest thing of that church ever was. The boys was always telling tales about what lived there, and it was closed up with shutters most of the time so nobody could see in. They said a great big white dog lived there. John Dowell said it had two heads. Once when I went to the Captain's alone, John was hiding behind

the church and yelled at me when I went by. I was sure scared. I run all the way to the Captain's just as hard as I could tear, and by the time I got there, I was crying. He picked me up, and I wasn't scared any more. He give me a white peach. After while, he reached for his crutch, and he said, "Hattie, I got something to show you."

That was the first time I ever seen Lula. She was little and red, and awful ugly I thought, but I didn't say nothing. He was sure crazy about her. It was the only child he ever had. "When she grows up, this will be her farm, and she will live in this house," he said.

I never took to Lula. She busted that pretty doll I had, the one with the china head. I was always having to give in to her because she was littler. Pa bought me a little cup and saucer from Nashville when he went to the Church Conference. Lula throwed it in the road one day so the Dixon's wagon and team would run over it. She told her ma she didn't do it.

I was over there the time her Pa caught her writing on the house. She said I did it, but the Captain had seen her at it. She put "Lula plus Willie" all across the wall under the kitchen window. That was Willie Dugger. The Captain tried to get it off, but he never could. He told Lula she'd ought to know better. He said he'd do away with anything he loved hisself before he'd let folks ruin it. He sure hated having the house marked up like that.

He used to tell us about how it was built. His brother Clyde had done all the work where it took a whole man to do it. The Captain had rode on the wagon to haul the logs and rocks, and he could do a heap of sitting-down work. "I hewed out them rocks myself, every one of them, just like grandpap taught me," he said. "It's a mighty strong house built on that foundation. It's stood two bad storms already, and it will stand another one, if the Lord's willing." He used to tell about how they had split the logs into planks and planed them down smooth. He made the nails hisself.

He sure could tell mighty good stories, the Captain could, but I always loved to hear him tell about his house. It seemed like it

done him so much good. "An old one-legged man like me what the government has got to keep up ain't much account for nothing," he said, but he sure was a good hand to tell stories.

It was the night that Lula run off with Radnor Johnson that the Captain had his first stroke. Radnor Johnson was as drinking and no-account man as they was in the county. He wouldn't work no where regular; but he sure was handsome. His hair was black as midnight and curled tight, and he had big shoulders and a devilish smile that was enough to drive any woman crazy.

The Captain thought Lula was a-spending the night with the Jacob girls, but she and Radnor drove up about ten o'clock and hollered to the Captain. They hitched the mare and started into the house, but the Catpain had got up in time to meet them at the door.

"The two of you will never set foot in my house," he told them. He leaned against the doorframe for he didn't have his crutch. We seen it all because the word had got around and a bunch of us had come up for the shivaree. But pretty quick we seen there was something wrong. In a minute, Radnor and Lula started walking back toward the buggy. It was dark except for the lamp in the house, but I could see Lula when she stopped Radnor and kissed him hard, right in the middle of the path where her Pa could see. That was the night the Captain had his first stroke. While he was so sick, Mrs. Blades sent for Lula, but he wouldn't see her.

Lula and Radnor had it mighty hard. He was always drinking and running after some trash like them Jeffmans. Folks said he was put out because he didn't get no money off the Bladeses. Lula had three babies and they every one died. I reckon it was a blessing, things turning out like they did.

After Mrs. Blades died, the Captain was all tore up and said he didn't know how he could do without Lula any longer, so he sent for them to come there to live. Well, that was just as good as Radnor wanted. He and Lula pretty quick run through with all they could get their hands on. The Captain was getting mighty feeble, and he didn't have nobody to do for him, so he had to keep

them. They even sold the chickens and bought whisky and clothes with the money. The house sure wasn't kept clean and nice like when Mrs. Blades was living. She would have turned over in her grave if she had knowed how things went.

I used to go to see the Captain every chance I got. He always seemed proud to see me, but I had four children and was kept mighty busy at home. His mind wasn't good. Some folks said when his wife died, he had another stroke. He would set there under the beech tree in that rocking chair with the little lions on each side of his head, and he'd talk about the house.

"I cut them rock myself," he'd say. ". . . Them yellow poplar logs was tall and straight . . . four rooms . . . red cedar shingles . . . both chimneys . . . strong house . . ."

It usually didn't make much sense what he said.

The first I knowed anything was wrong, Frank—that's my oldest boy—come home from the Captain's telling about the rock. He and the Captain was setting in the front yard when this rock come sailing over the house and landed right at the Captain's feet. Frank jumped up and commenced to go around to see who throwed it. But the Captain didn't want he should. He said something about "when a man couldn't trust his own folks."

I laid off to see the Captain. It was hot when Mamie come over to see me that afternoon. I was making preserves of the last of them pears. She told me what folks was saying about the stones. They said you could hear them hitting the side of the Captain's house most any night when you passed. They said they was little scarred places all over the side of the house where they had hit. They was lots of them bout the window of the room where the Captain was sleeping. She said he had broke awful of late.

I set my head right then to go to the Captain's first thing in the morning, pears or no. I took the children and we went to Mamie's. In the afternoon, I went to see the Captain. He was mighty feeble and was lying down when I got there. He heard me talking to Lula—his hearing never had failed none—and he hollered for me to come on up there. He sure had broke. He looked thin, and

there were deep lines running from his nose to the corners of his mouth. His mustache looked kind of ragged. He said he wasn't feeling so good—that his head hurt. I set right by the table that was next to the bed. He asked me if I thought the stairs was giving away a mite. Said he'd have to get Radnor to fix them. I stayed till nearly dark, I was so glad to see him. He looked very well, considering.

But that was the night of the fire. Mamie's house ain't but a step down the road, and we woke up after midnight to see the Captain's house on fire. We run up there quick as we could and took the buckets and tubs, but it was too late for such. The flames was licking out the upstairs windows. I saw one of the shutters fall on an old rose bush of Mrs. Blades'. The fire was running all along the eaves and framing like it was hungry and couldn't get there fast enough. I seen Radnor and Lula coming from the spring carrying buckets. "Where's the Captain?" Mamie hollered. "I'll take him to my house." Lula come up and her face was white as could be. There was streaks of soot all over her. "He's in his room." Her voice rattled and sounded funny. "Lula, what you mean?" We were shaking her and trying to get some sense out of her, but it wasn't no use. She just stood there with her eyes all big and black, and wouldn't say no more. There was a little noise in her throat but she didn't say nothing.

I never saw no place burn so flat to the ground. We couldn't ever find a trace of the Captain except the metal tip off his crutch. Lula said they heard him call, and Radnor went in to see what he wanted. Then she said it wasn't but a minute till it seemed like the whole place was on fire.

We never knowed just exactly how it happened. I'm glad, though, that the Captain didn't live after the house burned. He would have hated so bad for it to burn down. He set a heap of store by his house.

After the fire, Lula and Radnor lived in the smokehouse. It wasn't but just a little while 'til Radnor got killed. He was dog-

drunk one night, and the train cut his legs clean off. He died without anybody knowing where he was. Bled to death, I reckon.

It was after that when Lula started acting funny. Whenever I'd go over there, she'd be all right for a while and then she'd start talking about the house and how her father built it. She talked for all the world just like the old Captain. She let on like it was still standing there, but there wasn't nothing left except the chimneys and grass and briars where the rest used to be. She took to sitting out front under the beech tree. She'd just set there on one of the chimney rocks, and sometimes she kind of sung and sometimes she talked.

"He built it hisself," she'd say. Then she'd tell about the yellow poplar logs and the rocks and the shingles.

I never go back to Tanyard Holler much since we moved out on the pike, but I still visit some with the folks over there. They say Lula is plumb crazy now. That she runs through the woods back of the Negro church of a night and hollers. She sits in the yard of a day, and sometimes she sings. Some say a white dog runs with her in them woods. But I don't believe such talk. Lula don't keep no dog.

THE LADY AND THE CAT

WALTER SULLIVAN (Class of 1945)

It was just getting dark. He cut across the field in back of the schoolhouse. He did not want to be late for supper, so he was walking fast, with his head down. He didn't see the white woman until she spoke to him.

"Wait a minute, Lebanon."

He jerked his head up. His cap fell to the ground. "Yes'm." He bent from the waist to pick up the cap. Everybody said he was limber.

"Are you working anywhere now?" she asked.

He did not answer. He had seen the cat.

"Can't you talk, Boy?"

Lebanon was almost five feet tall, and the cat came a little above his knees. The woman was big too, bigger than Izora or Petway.

"Yes'm, I can talk. . . . No'am, I ain't doing nothin'."

"You want a job?" the woman asked.

The cat was yellow, with hair that was shiny, and looked like it had been brushed. Sometimes, it stood up and made the animal look taller. Its feet were big, too big even for its body.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked.

"I want you to work around the house, and look after the cat," she said.

The woman was tall and slender and strong looking, and her hands were long and bony. Her hair was black, cut short, and she wore oval shaped glasses with green rims.

"I don't know if I could look after no cat or not," he finally said.

"You tell Izora I offered you a job," she replied.

"How you know my mammy's name?" he asked.

"You do what I tell you."

"How you know my name Lebanon?" he said.

She did not answer. She walked away, across the field toward the schoolhouse. The big cat followed her. Its tail stuck straight up, like it wasn't a tail, but a stick nailed on and pointing straight up.

Lebanon ran across the field, still holding the cap in his hand.

He hoped he wouldn't see the white woman again. Izora said he had to take the job. He wasn't anything but a nigger, and he shouldn't go around talking about white folks' pets. He started running at the edge of the field behind the schoolhouse.

But she was there.

"Lebanon."

He stopped, and walked back to a spot where the woman stood between him and the cat. He was panting. He reached up quickly and snatched his cap from his head, like he was afraid it was going to get away. He had almost forgotten to take it off.

"Did you tell Izora?" the woman asked.

"Yes'm," he said.

"What did she say?"

"She say I's gotta work for you," Lebanon said.

"You know where I live?" She reached down and scratched the cat along the back of the neck. Her fingernails were long like her hand, but they were not polished.

"No'am. How you know who I is, Mam?" he asked.

The cat rubbed up against her leg, and she kept scratching the fur at the back of its neck. "What time can you go to work?" she said.

"I leaves school at eleven thirty," Lebanon replied. "I can commence at twelve."

"You be here tomorrow at twelve o'clock."

"Yes'm. What your name, Mam? Who'se I gonna work for?" Lebanon asked.

She turned, and left without answering. The big cat followed her across the field.

She was waiting for Lebanon at noon the next day. The big cat

was not with her. That made him feel better, but he was afraid of her too.

Today, without the cat, she looked taller. Lebanon looked at her face, almost for the first time. Her nose was big and pointed at the end. She had a brown mole on her forehead, over her right eye. She took off her green-rimmed glasses and polished them with a handkerchief. Her hands were red and big, and there was still no polish on the nails.

She spoke to him. He didn't understand her. He said nothing, but followed her across the field and around the schoolhouse.

"Come walk beside me," she said.

He moved up, and he could hear her feet crunching in the gravel on the road. He kept looking straight ahead.

"What you want me to call you, Mam?" he finally asked.

"You may call me Miss Bagot," she said.

They walked for some time. The road ended, and they took a path that led off to the right in between two wild cherry trees. Lebanon knew where he was.

"I thought nobody didn't live in that house on the hill, Miss Bagot," he said.

"I live there," she said.

They could see the house now. It was a two-story building, almost square, but with a red, tin roof that came up to a point in the center. The paint was peeling off the roof in scales that curled up, and were white on the side that had been next to the tin. The bricks were chipped and rough. On the porch, next to the wall, Lebanon could see little piles of mortar that had come out from between the bricks.

"You live by yourself, Miss Bagot?" Lebanon asked.

"No, Phebe is with me," she said.

"Who Phebe?"

"Phebe's the cat you saw." She opened the door of the house and turned around to face Lebanon. She took off her green-rimmed glasses, and looked at him like she couldn't see.

"You go around back and go on in the kitchen," she said, and went in and shut the door.

The shades were down in the kitchen. Lebanon stood just inside the door, and did not close it. The light, coming in behind him, was bright on something shiny, that seemed to be moving across the room. He stepped back a little, and his body pressed against the edge of the door, which was balanced firm, for a second, then slammed shut, out from behind him.

Miss Bagot came in from the dining room. He watched her move across the room, and stand in front of a window. Her head and shoulders were black in front of the green shade, and she looked like she didn't have a face. Then she raised the shade.

There was a coal range over by the door, that must have been as old as the house. Next to the windows was a table that had been varnished over and over again, until the finish was cracked and gummy looking. There were some chairs around the table, and back in the corner, an ice box, with a dishpan underneath to catch the water that drained off the ice. Next to the wall, across from the back door, there was a tall safe, with a glass door that was half open, and swinging back and forth on its hinges.

Miss Bagot stood very straight beside the table. She had taken off her coat, and she had on a white blouse that was loose and wrinkled, and a skirt the same color as the rims of her glasses.

"You stay here until I want you," she said.

She went back through the swinging door to the dining room. The door kept swinging after she was through it, and it made a soft bumping sound like somebody was beating on the sill with a rubber hammer.

She was calling, "Phebe, Phebe." There was a scraping noise, then the sound of the animal's claws on the floor, following the woman's heavy footsteps.

Lebanon sat down in a chair beside the stove. Under the table, he saw a shallow pan. The bottom and sides of the pan were covered with a white scum. Out the window, the leaves of a magnolia tree were big, and damp looking, and they moved slightly

beneath the shades, like they weren't leaves, but green hands reaching in the window.

After a while, he heard the footsteps coming back. When they were almost to the kitchen, Miss Bagot said, "Lebanon, give Phebe some water."

Then she pushed the door open, enough to let the cat through. Lebanon could see the fingers of one hand as she held the door open for the cat. They were bony at the knuckles, and white, except where one of them had a red scratch running to the nail.

The cat walked under the table. It licked in the pan, then lay down beside it. Lebanon took the pan to the sink and filled it with water. He put it back beside the cat, and she got to her feet and lapped up the water, but without making a sound. The water was all white from the scum that had been in the pan.

Phebe lay down again beside the pan. Lebanon watched her across the stove. She was stretched out beside the pan with her legs folded up under her, and her head bent down, almost touching the floor. She was breathing heavily, her sides swelling out and drawing in, and the hair standing up all over her body.

Miss Bagot stayed away a long time. When she came in, she looked at the cat under the table, then at Lebanon. "You may go home now," she said. "You be here tomorrow, after school."

He ran down the path, in between the wild cherry trees, and out into the road. He was glad to be getting home before dark.

The next day when he went around to the back door of the house on the hill, Miss Bagot stuck her head out of an upstairs window. She didn't have her glasses on. She shaded her eyes with one of her hands. Her arm was bare, and it was strong looking and big like her hands. The skin was tight and dry over her bony elbow.

"Come in, and come up here," she said.

Lebanon opened the door. The cat was sitting under the table. Her front paws were stretched out before her, one on each side of the pan. It looked like she was holding the pan in her front paws.

He found the stairs, and went up slowly, dragging his hand

lightly over the banister. He hesitated at the top, and Miss Bagot called out, "In here."

She was standing in a room at the end of the hall. She had on a short-sleeved house coat. It was red with big blue flowers. She was wearing some red house slippers that were big and fuzzy. Her whole face was white and dry looking, but it was hot in the room.

"You go get Phebe, and bring her in here," she said.

Lebanon went down into the kitchen. He stood back and reached out with one arm toward the cat. He grabbed one of her front paws with his hand. The cat slapped at him with the other paw, and he released her and jumped back. He almost lost his balance.

He reached out again, and took her by the fur on the back of her neck. He pulled her up, and began walking toward the door. She held back. Her claws, scraping along the floor, made deep grooves in the linoleum.

Lebanon dragged her to the steps. The cat began walking, but she still pulled back.

Miss Bagot opened the door for him. "Don't let her go," she said. She shut the door behind her and looked hard at the cat through her glasses with the green rims. She put her hand on the back of Phebe's neck and said, "Now you can let go of her."

The cat slapped at her, but she kept rubbing the back of the animal's neck with her big hand.

The cat began to look drowsy. Miss Bagot put her free hand under its belly and started to lift it, but the cat jumped away, and ran toward the door. Her eyes were dull and watery, and the pupils were small and deep like little black holes. She turned, and brushing against Lebanon's leg, ran under the bed.

Miss Bagot grabbed the stick that was holding the window up, and started poking it under the bed. The window slammed down. Finally, the cat ran out from under the foot of the bed, and Miss Bagot caught her around the neck with both hands. Phebe had some lint in her whiskers.

Miss Bagot started looking through her glasses at the cat again.

Phebe stopped slapping at her, and Miss Bagot laid the animal on the bed, still looking at it hard, and holding the animal in both hands.

"You may go," she said.

Lebanon ran down the stairs and back to the kitchen. He sat down beside the range, and looked at the pan with the white scum in it. The house was quiet.

After a while, he heard Miss Bagot coming down the steps. She walked slowly. She came into the kitchen, still wearing the blue house coat and red slippers.

"Go down in the basement and get a spade," she said.

Lebanon found the spade and came back. Miss Bagot was waiting for him. She was holding a big wooden box, tied around the middle with a piece of rope. She started out the back door. She said nothing. Lebanon knew she wanted him to follow her.

They walked some distance from the house, before she stopped.

"Dig a hole here," she said.

Lebanon stuck the spade in the earth. The ground was soft. It was easy digging. Soon he had a hole, bigger at the top than at the bottom, but big enough at the bottom for the box.

Miss Bagot bent over and lowered the box easily into the ground.

"Fill it up," she said.

Lebanon packed the dirt down around the sides of the box.

"That's enough. Don't make a mound," she said.

He stomped the dirt down with his feet.

"Give me the spade," she said.

He gave it to her. She stood holding it in her big hands, and looking at him through her green-rimmed glasses. She took a fifty-cent piece from the pocket of her house coat and handed it to him.

"You may go now," she said. "I won't need you tomorrow. Don't come back tomorrow."

He went down the hill, holding the fifty cents in his hand. Once, he looked back and saw the magnolia tree by the kitchen window, the big leaves moving slightly back and forth.

HOW FAR'S IT TO L. A.

WALTER SNELL (B.A.'42)

There were three men in the Ford; they sat in the front seat as if they had known each other for some time. The driver was a short man, tanned, and he wore a hat. "Boy," he said, "don't you worry. We'll be in Los Angeles by tomorrow noon."

"You know, I wanta get there tomorrow; I wanta get there as soon as possible, Elmer." It was the fellow by the window. He held an open bottle of beer between his legs.

"Well, we will," said the driver, called Elmer.

The third fellow, the one in the middle, was tall and well dressed. "Sure, if we drive all night. I know we can make it."

"Well," said the man with the bottle—his face was prickly with whiskers—"you been good to me, Elmer. But when you get tired tonight I want this fellow to drive." He turned to the one wedged in between. "Can you drive?"

"I think so."

"Well, damn it, a guy in my condition can't drive, can he, Elmer? Elmer's been good to me. Isn't that right, Elmer?"

The driver smiled and nodded.

"This guy looks pretty good, doesn't he, Elmer?"

"Right!"

" I guess he can ride all the way to L. A. with us."

"Yea . . . but don't you pick up any more guys like what you let off in El Paso. He looked too suspicious to me—the way he eyed your money."

"What happened?" said the fellow in the middle.

"Oh, we picked up a mean looking devil. Harry here pulled out his wallet and showed how much money he had. You ought not to do anything like that, Harry. That fellow could have licked you over the head. You're too drunk."

"Well, I had you to take care of me, didn't I, Elmer?"

"Yea, but I won't always be around."

Harry tipped his bottle back. The beer foamed; some oozed out on his chin and clung in his whiskers; some splashed on his pants. He put the bottle down. "Elmer, I want some more beer. Stop at the next town."

"Go to hell."

"Aw, I'm not drunk. But my friend, listen." He turned to the tall fellow. "Don't you ever let this stuff get you. It'll ruin you. Look at me. I been drinking for sixteen years, sixteen bottles a day. That and women. Don't touch them. I'm just a beer salesman.. I gotta get to L. A. tomorrow 'cause my dad's dying. Think we can make it, Elmer?"

"Sure."

"Think I got enough money, Elmer?"

"You keep that money in your pocket."

Then Harry leaned over into the back seat and rummaged among messy shirts and clothes piled knee deep on the floor. He pulled out a shirt; it was spotted with red stains. "Look!" he said. "Somebody owed me forty bucks!"

The tall man looked at him as if trying to guess what he meant. "Did you get the money?"

"Don't it look like it?"

"Well, who's blood is that—yours or his?"

"His! What'd you think? He wouldn't pay me my forty bucks, and I needed it worse than he did."

The fellow in the middle laughed—a half believing, half unbelieving laugh. "You really gave him the works, didn't you?"

"Damn right. I'm a gentleman; but when a guy owes me money and won't pay and starts gettin' tough, then I take it away from him." Then he began to banter. "Beer's good, but listen, my friend. It'll ruin you. I used to play football in college; in fact I was a star at Notre Dame. But don't you ever touch it. I was a fine guy before I started messing with it. My dad was a rich man—but the depression got him—and he wanted me to have the best

education. I got a telegram from L. A. yesterday saying my dad was sick. Isn't that right, Elmer? He'll probably be dead before I get there. I didn't tell them I was coming and I haven't seen them in three years. I'm the black sheep in the family. They'll be surprised."

Harry tipped back his bottle. "Elmer, how far do you think it is to L. A.?"

Elmer rubbed his chin with the palm of his hand and the bristles scratched. He shook his head. "We'll get there."

The three drove in silence for a while. Elmer pulled his hat down to shield his eyes from the sun. The road was good, and he drove fast; the tires hummed.

Then Elmer picked up his hat and scratched his head with his middle finger. He spoke to the tall fellow. "I guess I ought to tell you my story. It may sound funny but I've been looking for my wife for two years. I've got a lead on her now. I've been to California twice, to Virginia; I've been just about everywhere. But everytime I hit a town where I hear she is staying, they tell me she just left. I'm going to get her this time. A friend of mine wired me from San Diego saying she is at the Bay Hotel. She doesn't know I'm coming this time; I'm going to fool her; I'm going to pop in on her and make her come home. I wanta see that kid of mine."

Then Harry took a swallow from his bottle. He interrupted. "That's right, Elmer. I'm going to take Elmer to L. A.; see my father; then we're going to San Diego and find that wife and kid of his. Isn't that right, Elmer?"

Elmer nodded. "I quit work right after she left," he continued, "and ain't been back since then. I don't know how she's living, 'cause she only had six hundred dollars when she left. That wouldn't last very long with all that travelling and taking care of the kid and food, too." He paused a moment. "I know she wants to come home, 'cause I could tell by talking to people where she stayed. But she's too proud. I could call out the law and have the cops after her right away, but I don't want to do it that way."

They were approaching the city limits of some town. A road sign whizzed by—"Arizona U. S. 80." Harry jammed his bottle between his legs and pointed at a filling station. "Stop there! We need some gas."

The tall man in the middle looked at the red liquid in the thermometer-like gas guage; it was three-fourths full. He laughed.

The station operator came out of the door smiling. He lifted his hat momentarily. Harry got out and said, "Fill it up." He swayed a bit and steadied himself on the open car door. "We better fill it up. How far's the next town?"

The operator, lifting the hose off its hook, was pleasant. His little black bow tie was tilted. "About thirty miles," he said.

"How far's it to the border."

"You just crossed it."

"No, I mean the California border."

The operator looked at Harry queerly and started smiling. "Oh, it's about six hundred miles, about six hundred and fifty-eight."

"Well, how far's it from the border to L. A.?"

"I couldn't tell you that."

The tall man in the car laughed. Elmer did not, but he looked at the tall fellow and shook his head; then he climbed out and lifted the hood, and picking up a red water can, filled the radiator. He moved casually; his cowboy boots made him seem a little taller than he was. He spoke to the operator. "The damned radiator's clogged."

Then the tall man got out, too, and stretched. He wore a light, neatly creased palm beach suit. He jammed his hands in his pockets and sauntered around, looking at the coca-cola machine and then at the gas pumps. "About ready?" he asked Harry.

"Yea."

As they drove down the street Harry said, "I want some more beer, Elmer. I'm thirsty. Stop at the next place."

Elmer nodded. The beer parlor was on the edge of town. A neon sign hung in the window—"Beer." "You better stay here, boy. You don't wanta get picked up."

"I ain't drunk, Elmer."

"Okay, but don't go asking foolish questions."

As the three walked in, the tall, well dressed man glanced quickly around and singled out a waitress behind the counter and stared at her. She was not beautiful. All three saw her and watched her breasts bounce gently beneath her brown waitress' uniform as she walked.

"Wow," said the tall fellow.

Elmer walked up to her casually. "Got any Budweiser?"

"Yes sir." She smiled.

Harry sat down. "Then gimme three please. Two to take out." He looked around, at the bathing-suit-girl pictures on the wall, then at the waitress as she slid back the cover on the refrigerator. The eyes of all three turned to her legs as she leaned over and her dress slid up.

"How far's it to the next town?" Harry asked.

Elmer looked disgusted. "You just asked back there at the gas station, didn't you?"

"Yea, but I want to find out the right distance."

The waitress slid the beer bottles before him. Little cold droplets of moisture clung to the outside of the bottles. The girl smiled; she wiped her hands on her apron. "I don't know. You mean to Green City, don't you?"

Harry seemed satisfied with her answer. "Well, do you know how far it is to L. A.?"

The girl smiled, picked up the change and rang it in the cash register. She did not answer.

Elmer got up. "Come on." When they were out in the street he said, "There ain't no sense in asking them questions, boy; they all tell you different. Not a one of them will tell you the same."

It was dark when they picked her up. They had been driving for some ten miles in silence. Elmer had stopped the car before Harry and the tall man knew why. "You better come around to the other side, lady; that door don't open."

"Oh, thank you."

"Just shove some of that stuff around and make yourself some room."

"Praise the Lord," she said. "Thank you, thank you." In the dim light they saw she was big, not fat, but large-boned and masculine. She carried a hat box.

As she climbed in, the tall man twisted in his seat. He had taken off his coat earlier. "Let me see, maybe I better get that coat out of your way. We'll put it right over here; there, that's better."

The lady helped him move the coat over in the opposite corner. "I'll watch it," she said, "and see that it doesn't get mussed."

There was a moment of silence as the tall man straightened around and as Elmer shifted gears. The tall man smiled a little satisfied smile, and he glanced at Elmer who pushed back his hat with two fingers and scratched his head with his middle finger. Harry took a quick drink and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. Elmer said, "How far you goin', lady?"

"A long ways! Los Angeles."

"That's where we're goin'."

"Oh! The Lord be praised!"

Harry twisted around so that his back was against the door. "Yes, lady, you can ride all the way with us if you want."

"Thank you."

"You see," Harry added quickly, "this is my car and Elmer here is my friend. Isn't that right, Elmer? We're goin' to L. A. to see my dad who's dying and then we're goin' to San Diego and find Elmer's wife. Isn't that right, Elmer?"

Elmer nodded.

"Elmer's been taking good care of me. I'm a beer salesman. What're you doing out on the road, lady?"

"I'm a minister of the gospel."

"Oh!" He was silent for a moment. "I ain't no minister of the gospel, lady, but I'm a gentleman. Thas right. I drink a little, but I'll take you all the way to L. A."

"That's very nice of you."



Lights flickered ahead on the horizon. The tall man pointed at them. "Looks like a town."

Elmer said, "How far do you think it is?"

"About two miles."

"Naw, ten would be closer to it. What's the speedometer read? We'll see."

They drove in silence. Harry opened a bottle with an opener which dangled from the choke stop. The beer frothed. He passed it to the tall man. "Have a drink."

"Thanks."

"Elmer, let's stop at that town and get some more beer."

As they drove from the darkness of the desert to the brightly lighted street, Elmer said, "I told you so. Twelve miles." He parked by a fire hydrant.

The tall man said, "There's a fire plug."

Harry said, "You go in and get me some, Elmer."

Elmer opened the door. A figure walked up to the car on Harry's side. They saw he had a gun in a holster at his belt; his uniform was khaki colored. Harry took a quick drink. The figure

said, "Gentlemen, did you know you were violating two state laws?"

Harry wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Oh, hello."

Elmer closed the door and leaned over the tall man toward the brown figure at the window. "Yes sir. I didn't see that damn fire plug."

"That's all right! But what about this drinking in public?"

Harry said, "We're on our way to L. A. My dad's dying, officer, and we're trying to get there by tomorrow."

"You're in Arizona now, mister."

"Yes sir."

"It's against the state law to drink in public. You'll have to move along."

"Yes sir."

Elmer started the motor and backed out. The tall man said, "Nice copper, wasn't he?"

Harry waited a moment, as they drove down the street. He looked back out the window and then put the bottle to his lips. "Let's go back, Elmer; I wanta beat his nose in."

"There's no sense in startin' trouble, boy."

"Aw, come on. I can whip him."

Elmer drove on.

They drove for about twenty minutes. Harry tinkered with his empty bottle. He glanced into the back seat at the woman. He glanced again. "Lady, you lonely?"

"I'm fine, thank you."

"Maybe I better come back there and keep you company."

"You may if you like, but I'm all right, thank you."

Harry was quiet for a moment. The tall man fidgeted with the gear shift knob between his legs. His fingers gripped it and relaxed alternately. Harry turned around, then, and climbed into the back seat. "You need somebody to talk to, don't you, lady?" The tall man looked at Elmer and smiled.

Harry said, "Lady, I'm a gentleman and I'm gonna treat you like a gentleman."

"Oh, that's nice of you."

"You don't like my drinking, do you?"

"Of course not!"

Harry pushed some of his clothes aside on the floor and shifted his feet. He sat close beside her. "I'm taking you all the way to L. A., lady; that's a long nice ride, isn't it?"

"It certainly is."

"Don't you think you ought to pay me someway?"

The lady hesitated. "You don't think I should criticize your drinking? But you see it's against my religion."

"I mean, since I'm taking you all the way to L. A. you ought to pay me."

The tall man in the front seat laid his head back and closed his eyes.

The lady continued. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to insult you."

Harry rubbed his whiskers with his palm. Then he said, "We can stop at a tourist home if you want; it'll be easier."

The lady seemed puzzled. Harry pressed on. "We'll feel much better if we rest and drive on in the morning. But we'll have to get a room together—save money you know."

The lady said, "I don't think that'll be necessary."

"Sure, we'll feel much better in the morning. Isn't that right, Elmer?"

"No," the lady said.

"I'm taking you all the way to L. A., lady."

"But I'm a minister of the gospel."

Harry put his hand on her thigh. She drew her leg away and brushed off his hand. Harry said, "We can just stop for a few minutes then."

The lady spoke louder. "Why are you so quiet up front? Why don't you say something?"

The tall man shifted slightly. Elmer drove on steadily.

"I'm a gentleman, lady," Harry continued, "but if you wanta ride with us to L. A. you oughta pay me." He reached for her knees.

"If you insist I'll get out right here."

Harry sat quietly. The tall man sat up, straight. A few moments later, Harry said, "Stop here, Elmer. Let me drive a while."

"You can't drive, Harry. You're drunk."

"I wanta drive a while."

Elmer slowed the car down. The tall man said, "Aw, you can't drive, Harry. Let Elmer. You go on and sleep for a while."

Harry climbed out and walked around to the front. He stumbled, and clambered into the driver's seat. The lady suddenly said, "Okay, you can let me out."

Harry had the car in low. Elmer said, "Let her out, Harry. It's her privilege."

He shifted into second.

"Come on, boy. Let her out."

Harry stopped. The lady climbed out and pulled out her hat box. "God bless you!" she said. "May He save your souls."

Harry drove on. The car weaved and moved back and forth across the black stripe. The tall fellow gripped the panel. Elmer said, "What didya have to do that for? What didya have to make her get out in the middle of the desert for?"

Harry wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Hell, she wouldn't pay for the ride."

"Oh." Elmer took off his hat and scratched his head. "I was fixin' to get back there myself after a while."

The tall fellow spoke to Elmer. "I knew that's what Harry was doing back there; I heard him."

Elmer said, "I reckon it's a good thing you let the bitch out. She'd just be in the way!"

Harry stopped the car. "Okay, Elmer, you go ahead and drive." He climbed out and walked around to the other front door; he sat beside the tall fellow. "That's why I drove—to get rid of her."

They were silent for a moment. Lights of a car glared ahead. The road was straight. "How far do you think that car is?" the tall fellow asked.

"Ten miles," Elmer said.

"It'll be five minutes before we pass him."

Harry looked to see if there were more beer in the bottle on the floor. "Elmer, think we can make L. A. by tomorrow noon?"

"Sure."

"We gotta get there. Isn't that right, Elmer?" He slipped the empty bottle between his legs. "How far do you think it is to the California border?"

EVIL

CECIL WOODS (B.A.'42)

Joshua Arnold knew that in a few minutes he would be passing that house. He knew that it was on the right, a little way back from the road. He knew just how it looked, a little one-story house, needing a coat of paint, with no shade in the yard. But he did not turn his head to look at it. He kept his eyes straight to the front and stood in the wagon with his feet apart and drove his team at a lumbering trot down the dirt road. It was early. The people in that house probably were not up yet. Poor half-wit girl. That was what his mother called her. Poor half-wit girl, he thought again. Then he stopped thinking about that house.

The gravel crunched under the iron wheel rims. The horses' hoofs struck the road hard and clear. Sometimes for a few steps the team trotted right together and Joshua liked the sound of it. The young roan mare was already hot. Here it was still the cool of the morning and four miles more into town and she was already hot. Always fretting herself. She'll never be the equal of the old one, he thought. He stopped at the highway and looked up and down. Then he turned toward town and moved the team as far as he could onto the shoulder. It was good to be going to town by himself on Saturday morning. He let the horses walk, for the sun was getting higher. This day seemed different from the others.

When he reached town he crossed the square. It was not crowded yet. The stores were open and a few of the town people were about. But in the afternoon Joshua knew that the square would be full of wagons and dusty cars and the sidewalks would be streaming with people. He turned off at the corner of North Main and drove straight to Hiram's Feed Store. He stayed around and helped them load the wagon, then he got back to his place and drove off. He wanted to stay in town awhile. He wanted to look at the store windows and to watch the women with their painted

faces and the girls with their long hair. They'll be needing me at home, he thought. He crossed the square again, looking only from the corners of his eyes, and headed out the Cartersville Pike for home.

It was very hot now. He turned down the brim of his hat all the way round. He did not think. He listened to the horses' hoofs and to the wheels grinding over the rocks on the shoulder of the highway. He watched the cars fly past him and felt each time a gust of hot wind which, like the car, in a moment was gone. He let the horses walk all the way. It was a long time before he reached the place where the White's Creek Road meets the highway.

Joshua pulled back on the lines and brought the team to a stop in a little patch of shade. The horses stood still. They breathed in huge gasps which caused their bodies to sway rhythmically backward and forward with each breath. The sun smote from straight above and the wagon stuck out into the sun. Holding the lines in one hand he stepped over the side and onto the wheel, then jumped to the ground. He let the lines drop and the ends lie in the dust. He came round and stood at the heads of the horses. The sweat dripped from their bellies to the dust and ran down their faces in little streams. Their ears drooped, their glazed eyes looked at nothing. They panted. Joshua saw the long yellow teeth of the old one whose lips did not meet, now that she was so old. He straightened the rusty bit in her mouth and patted the soft part of her nose. He sat down on the little spot of grass in the shade. It was drying up too, like the weeds on each side of the road, like the grass in the pastures, like the young corn in the fields.

Another dry summer will finish us. The thought came in just the words his father used so often. Each morning and evening he would look at the clear, brilliant sky and at the weather vane on top of the tool shed and say, "Another dry summer will finish us." And Joshua knew that this was so. When you had to buy feed in the summer to keep the stock from starving, things were bad. That wagon was full of bought feed, shelled corn in sacks and hay in

bales. It was not even good hay and they robbed you for it. They knew you had to have feed.

These things were often in Joshua's mind. Even when he was not thinking about them he was troubled. He would wonder what was bothering him. Then he would remember, and because he was a good son, he would wish that there were something he could do. But there was nothing. He could not make it rain. There was nothing he could do except to work hard and not to mind when his father was angry for no reason and blamed him for things he could not help.

Joshua looked at his big hands and his brown arms. He lay back on his elbows and looked down the long body. It was a strong body. Joshua listened to a voice saying, "Josh is the best hand on the place, including the niggers." That's what his father used to say. He was, too. Joshua knew that he was. And his mother—Joshua liked to think of the things she said. "He's the best of the lot including the old ones who've moved off to town and the young ones not ready yet for school." It used to make him proud for them to say those things in front of the others or before company. He would always get up and leave the room when they said those things, but he liked to think about them later. He always had been a good boy. Joshua knew it. Hadn't they all said so for as long as he could remember?

He pulled up a few blades of grass and chewed on the pale, white ends. Still a little life in them. A good rain would save a lot of things in this country. They'll be wondering what's come of me, he thought, and got to his feet. The horses were breathing easier. He picked up the lines and climbed into the wagon. "Come up there, Roan! Git up!" He struck the roan mare across the back with the slack line. She gave a lurch which almost threw the boy off his feet. She'll never be the equal of the old, black one, he thought, as the wagon moved off down the dirt road. Ain't willing.

As the wagon drew near the curve, Joshua felt the breath come faster in his lungs and he quivered a little as he might have done on a cold morning. He pushed his hair off his forehead under the

crown of the straw hat and turned the brim up in back. Just around the turn on the left-hand side of the road was that house. He knew now that ever since he passed there going into town, and all the time they were loading the wagon, and all the way back on the highway, and all the time he had waited for the team to rest, and all the way down the White's Creek Road he had been keeping himself from thinking about that house. The wagon drew round the curve and there it was again. Now he would think about that house and the woman in it.

"Hey there, boy!" She was sitting on the porch in a rocker. Her forearms lay along the arms of the chair, her hands grasped the ends of the chair-arms. Each time the chair rocked forward she pushed back from the floor with her bare feet. "Hey there, boy!" she called again. "Stop a minute." He looked up the road and back. No one was coming. He drew up the team and stopped just in front of the gate.

She left the chair and walked down the path. She carried one arm across her stomach, the other was stiff at her side, its fingers grasping the skirt of the dress. It was a white dress with big red strawberries printed all over it. At the gate she stopped. She smiled a big, foolish smile. He did not speak. "Got a dollar, boy?" she said softly. "Want to come in? You can come in for a dollar." She kept smiling that silly smile. He looked at her teeth and at her dry, uncombed hair. She had a little pink satin ribbon tied in her hair. She came out of the gate and stood by the wagon, still holding to her skirt with one hand. "Come on in, boy." He looked at the yellow-brown feet and legs. They were streaked where she must have tried to wash them clean. She followed his eyes to her feet, then she looked back at him. "You want to come in?"

"I ain't got a dollar," he lied. The voice sounded strange, not like his voice.

"You come on in, boy."

"No!" He slashed at the mares with the lines and the wagon jerked away, leaving the woman standing in the road. She was laughing.

"You come back, boy," she shouted. "You come back any time you got a dollar." He did not look back, but he knew how she looked standing there in the road in her print dress, laughing and shouting after him. Ugly. He had never seen such an ugly woman.

"Bitch! Bitch!" he whispered to himself. That was what his father called her. "Bitch!" he whispered. But all the rest of the way, the whole mile and a half, he remembered the look of her body under the dress. He could not get it out of his mind.

He got out of the wagon to open the barnyard gate. He led the horses through and left them standing while he closed the gate. Then he led them toward the barn and stopped them with the end of the wagon at the feed room door. He unhitched the horses and led them to the trough to drink. They plunged their noses into the green water clear above the nostrils, then drew them back to let the water run out. Then they drank with great swishing sounds. Joshua watched the ripple of their throats and followed the path of the water from their mouths toward their deep chests. "Ungodly woman," he said aloud. That was what the preacher called her one Sunday. "Ungodly woman," he said again without speaking. Joshua tugged then jerked at the bridles to make them stop drinking. "You can drink your fill later, when you've cooled out," he said, and he led the mares into the barn and left them in their dark, strong-smelling stalls. Then he went to the house where his dinner was waiting.

They were all sitting around the table in the kitchen, except his mother. She was bending over, taking a pan of hot bread out of the stove. Joshua sat down at his place. He picked up his glass and started to drink. The tea was cool. He did not stop until the glass was empty.

"Can't you wait long enough to sugar that tea, young 'un?" His mother took the glass to fill it.

"I want more tea. You said nobody couldn't have more." The mother slapped the little tow-headed boy with the wide mouth who was called Paul. The little boy reached up with one hand to rub

the place on the side of his head. With the other hand he went on eating. She filled the glass and brought it back. Joshua poured some of the tea into his brother's glass and reached for the bowl of mashed potatoes. His father had finished eating.

"Where you been?"

"Where do you think? You sent me."



The man grabbed his fork and held it raised a little off the table. "You hear me talking to you. Where you been?" He was talking loud.

"I've been to town to get feed."

"It don't take that long to get a wagon load of feed. You started at daylight. You ought to have been back."

"Did you want me to kill them mares? I had to walk them most of the way. I had to stop to let them cool."

"I know what you been doing, all right. Yes, you been seeing some gal up in town. You been out galin' when I sent you to town to get a wagon load of feed and come straight back."

"No! No! Next time you want anything in town go after it

yourself. And old man Hiram says you needn't expect no more feed on credit. This is the last."

"I'll teach you to yell at me, my little man." The father shoved his chair back and came to stand over the boy. He drew Joshua to his feet by the shoulders. "What did you say again?"

"Mr. Hiram says you ain't going to get more feed on credit," he said quietly.

"What else?"

"I said the next time you want anything in town go after it yourself!" he shouted and wrenched out of his father's grasp. "And take your hands off of me!"

The father struck with the back of his hand across the cheek, across the mouth. Again, again.

"Roy Arnold, you stop that! You stop!" The woman threw herself at her husband's back. He pushed her away.

"Honor thy father!" He was pressing his right hand with the fingers of the left. It was bleeding. He had cut it on the boy's teeth. "Honor thy father! Have you forgotten that, boy? Have you forgotten that?" His face was dull red, almost purple. The words came in hoarse whispers. He left the kitchen and they heard him go into the front room and close the door.

"Ain't you ashamed?" His mother was looking at him, her hands raised to her face, covering her mouth. Joshua lifted his hand to his face and touched his cheek and his lips with the ends of his fingers. The children sat with their hands crossed in their laps, silent, staring at their brother. "Ain't you ashamed?" she said again. "Talking to your father like that, your father who loves you—"

"I ain't ashamed," he said slowly. "I ain't!" And the words burned in his throat. "I'm glad he can't get more feed! I hope it never rains! I hate you all!" He walked out the back door, letting the screen slam behind him.

"Come back here and eat, Joshua! You ain't eaten yet, Joshua! Come back and eat your dinner!" She stood at the back door and called. He did not come back, and she stood at the door and

watched him all the way to the barn. She saw him start pulling a sack of corn off the end of the wagon. Then she went back into the kitchen.

Later the boy saw his father come out of the house. They finished unloading the wagon together. They did not look at each other. They did not speak. When it was done Joshua walked away. His father did not ask where he was going, did not seem to notice.

Joshua started down the road toward town. He walked in the middle of the road. His jaws clamped and unclamped. His hands clasped and unclasped at his sides. His thumbnails dug into his fingers. He had left his hat at the house. The sun poured through his head. He felt sick. When he reached the place where the road crosses the branch, he left the road and walked till he came to a shady pool where the water was standing a foot or more deep. He took off his clothes and washed himself in the brown water. He came out and dried himself with his shirt. He put on his pants and left his shirt to dry in the sun. Then he lay down in the shade and slept.

When he woke the sunlight was slanting across the land. The light was no longer hard and bright. It was soft, golden. Joshua sat up and rubbed his legs and the back of his neck. He lay back in the grass and stretched and looked up at the leaves. They were still. Joshua was no longer angry. But there was something else, something new, like a strange flower blooming within him. He put on his shoes and his shirt, buttoning the shirt as he walked. He climbed the fence and jumped off the bank to the road. He walked down the road quickly. There were clouds gathering in the west.

She was standing in the door, smiling that silly smile. "What you want, boy?" She chuckled to herself. "What you want?"

"I'm hungry," he said, and the voice was not his voice. "Will you give me something to eat?"

She did not answer. She led him through the house and back to the kitchen. A man was sitting at the table. He was eating corn bread with molasses and butter. He glanced up at Joshua but did not speak. He looked back at his plate and went on eating

the bread and molasses. Joshua knew the man. He used to come over sometimes in the fall to help with the crops. But that was a long time ago. His name was Tat Miller. He was the woman's husband.

In the light of the oil lamp the woman did not look so bad. But Joshua knew that she was ugly and he tried not to look at her. He and the man ate without talking, without looking at each other. Once Joshua looked up straight into the man's eyes. They looked at each other for a long time, then the man licked the syrup off his knife and they both looked back into their plates. The woman did not sit at the table. She stood somewhere back in the shadows humming a strange, aimless tune to herself. Joshua was hungry, but he could not eat but a few bites. He put his knife across his plate to show that he had finished. The woman came and touched his shoulder. The man did not stop eating. Joshua followed her out of the kitchen.

It was dark when Joshua left the house. He wandered down the path and opened the gate. He looked back at the dark house. Then he started walking. He walked slowly, stopping sometimes to stand alone in the dark beside the road. He had never heard the world so quiet. Not a sound, only a little air stirring against his face and his thoughts in a slow, endless stream. Poor half-wit girl. Poor half-wit girl. And I have done this. He heard a soft rumbling in the sky and saw lightning play around the edges of the earth. And I have done this.

It was cool. There was no moon and no stars. The sky was almost black. It was going to rain. Poor half-wit girl. His thoughts came slow like his steps. And me. There ain't nothing too low. There ain't nothing I wouldn't do. And he knew that this was so.

A big drop splashed on his arm. Another drop struck his face. The drops came faster then swept in with a rustle which covered the land. Slowly he walked back through the rain which would make the fields green. Sadly he walked toward home.

ATTENDANT EVILS

PETER TAYLOR (Class of 1940)

I drove all over Orange Mound yesterday; I literally scoured the place. This Willie Belle is what I found. She's as good and as bad an another, and we'll have to make her *do,* impudence and all, for I believe she can be relied upon to put in an appearance every day, which is more than can be said for the lot as a whole now-a-days. It's one of the attendant evils of war, my dear daughter, one of the things which women must endure. And you'll have to learn to bear all sorts of insolence and sass throughout this duration business. I declare I spent two weeks before you came looking for a nurse who *would do,* and when I found this one yesterday, when I came upon one that I could take home with me and instruct and feel some certainty about her being here this morning when you arrived, I was ready to take any black thing I could lay my hands on at any wage. It's one of the attendant evils of war, and there'll be no cessation till the thing is over.

I went in the rain yesterday out into that section they call Possum Trot, though I knew there were no good servants there, and I drove through the Garrett Hill section and Poesy. But the niggers in Memphis simply don't want work, not even those in Orange Mound where one used always to find a pretty good nigger of some sort. A war plays havoc with things, my child. I know the signs. You won't remember how Aunt Lacey behaved during the last one, how she wouldn't use butter plates (There was "no need in nastyin' up all them dishes"), and I shan't tell you about it, for you have only kind memories of her. Well, I got my clue to this stupid, sullen Willie Belle from your Aunt Mary Gordon's new cook (who is a peach considering the times). She gave me the street number of a certain Marcella who would tell me how to get to Willie Belle's sister's house, and so I had Vergil drive me there about eleven o'clock in the morning through the pouring rain. There was a

young negro man sitting in the porch swing, but he paid us no attention when we stopped before the house. I said, "Vergil, sound your horn." Vergil pressed down on the horn for several seconds, but the boy didn't even look up at us. I was determined that he should come out and talk to me, and not to have Vergil get out in the rain in his new cap and fresh uniform and come back to my upholstery drenching wet. "Sound it again, Vergil," I said. The boy still didn't move. My idea was that he was too proud and fine to come out and stand in the rain. "Throw open your door, Vergil," I said, "so he can see we'll let him get shelter. He's too proud and fine to come out and stand in the rain." Vergil threw open the door and continued to press the horn. But he said with a grin:

"He's slumberin'."

I hadn't realized that at all. But he *was* asleep. That, you see, was his contribution to the war effort—sleeping in the middle of the morning on the porch swing. Why, they don't want to work as long as they have one crumb of bread and a roof over their heads.

We were about to pull away. I told Vergil to close his door, and it was the closing of that automobile door which suddenly brought a face to the entrance of the little shotgun house. A fat, brown negro woman opened the screen and called, " 'At blowin' for us?"

Think of it.

The boy on the swing roused himself and, opening two saucer-like eyes, he looked out at us through the rain like a drowsy cow. Then he looked at the woman in the doorway. I leaned forward quickly, rolled down my window, and made myself heard: "Marcella, will you step out here, please."

"Get some'n' on my hade," she called hatefully as though I were putting her to the most unconscionable inconvenience. A second later she appeared with a newspaper over her head. The nigger on the swing sat staring at us, and the woman ran out to the car in her bare feet. She leaped over the little ditch and just barely held herself up by slapping her big brown left hand down on the door beside me.

"Where does Willie Belle live, Marcella?" I said.

"Willie Belle?" she said, as though she were repeating words in some foreign tongue which she didn't understand. "Willie Belle," she said again, now as though trying to recall a face out of the past.

"Aren't you the Marcella who's a friend of Mrs. Gordon's Laura?"

Then she repeated "Laura" twice with just those intonations which she had put upon "Willie Belle." Finally she looked at me and said with an airy smile: "Oh, aren't Laura a tall dark-complected girl?"

"Yes, yes," I said perhaps too eagerly.

"No'm," she said, "I don't know no Willie Belle. I don't know what could have made Laura tell you that I do." She turned and called to the man on the porch who was now staring off toward the blank wall of a house next door, "You know a Willie Belle?" Without even looking at us he shook his head. But I sat there in silence and looked her directly in the eye for a minute, because I knew very well that she could tell me if she but would.

Presently Vergil said, "You know anybody wants to nurse?" I looked back and forth from one of their brown faces to the other, for they do seem to have some secret language which they speak with their eyes which no white person can possibly translate.

"Just a minute," she said. "Let me ask my husband." She went back through the rain between the forsythia and the jonquils to the porch, all the while holding the wet paper over her head. She sat down beside the man on the swing. Meanwhile I rolled up the window beside me, for the rain was blowing in on the upholstery. I could see through the rain that now fell on the glass and ran in long streams down to the sill the two of them sitting there talking the whole thing over casually, slowly, as though there were no war and as though you and the baby weren't arriving for another month. I really felt as though they weren't even discussing my errand but rather all those yellow flowers in the yard. At last she got up, however, and went into the house and put a dry piece of newspaper over her head. When she was at my window once again, I rolled down the glass, and she said, "My husband says he don't know no Willie Belle." But I could tell that she had some-

thing more to say by the way she looked about the inside of my automobile, noticing the upholstery and scrutinizing every article of clothing I wore. She looked at my hat an eternity (I was wearing the black velvet one with the two blue feathers in front), my choker, my beads, and of course my fur piece. You see, she knew that I was desperate and would take almost any amount of impertinence from her. That's the way the war affects them. Whatever they can get by with they'll do, just for the sake of getting by. Finally she said with that same airy smile, "I don't suppose you mean Willie B., do you, instead of Willie Belle? Nell Ruth's sister Willie B.? Nell Ruth who lives just up here in back of me on the next street. You'll see a yellow house with a big water oak in the yard, just around the corner and back two houses." Then she smiled that airy smile at me still again, standing there in the rain barefooted, with a wet newspaper over her head like a poke bonnet, but with the airiest smile you've ever seen, proud, don't you know, of her mouth full of yellow gold teeth.

I said, "Drive on, Vergil." And when we had driven up the street a way I glanced backward through the rear glass. But do you know they weren't looking after us at all, as you'd naturally expect, but the woman was still in the rain holding onto that newspaper with both hands and loosening the earth about the roots of her flowers with her bare toes. The man she called her husband, who was twenty years younger than she, was already asleep in the swing again. And mind you, my child, this Willie Belle's sister's house was virtually in a stone's throw of Marcella's.

But it was quite a different sort of looking place. It was painted, as Marcella had said, a bright yellow, and there was a tree in the yard. It sat high up above the street on a clay bank, and the house next to it was painted a pale blue. In the rain both houses seemed bright and fresh against the grey sky. Vergil sounded the horn, and I was filled with hope. I had the feeling that here I'd find the sort of girl I wanted. I felt it, even before the negro woman showed herself at the door. When she did appear, I could tell from the automobile that it was an extremely fine looking colored girl.

She wore a green sweater and brown skirt, and when I motioned to her to come out to me, she nodded right intelligently and stepped back inside the house a second. She reappeared with an umbrella and wearing galoshes. She ran through the yard avoiding mud puddles, and she smiled as she moved cautiously down the slick wooden steps over the clay bank. She put her head through the window and said very nicely, "Yes, Ma'am."

"You're Willie Belle, aren't you?" I said. But of course it wasn't Willie Belle, and she said no, that it was Nell Ruth. "I'm Willie Belle's baby sister," she said, "but Willie Belle stay here with I and my husband."

She was such a clean, neat, nice looking girl that I thought I'd say no more about Willie Belle. "Nell Ruth," I said, and I cleared my throat, for the girl looked at me so intelligently and even perceptively that I felt she observed my change of plans, "have you ever done any nursing?"

"Oh, yes," she said with a serious nod, "quite a lot." Her hair, which had been very thoroughly pressed out, lay flat on her head and was brought to a neat roll behind her ears, around the back of her neck.

"Well, I'd like to give you a try," I said. "What do you get?"

"Oh, I don't nurse now a lot" she answered quickly. "My husband don't usually like me to work out. He's night watchman for Barne's Supply Company and likes me here in day time."

I glanced down at my purse on my lap and said, "I pay well, Nell Ruth. Where did you work last?"

"Ah, I nursed last for Mrs. Norris in Morningside Park. She gives eight dollars a week."

Mind you, she said eight dollars a week, my child, in which of course there was not a word of truth. But that's the war for you. And now prepare yourself for this, my daughter. I said, "I'll give you nine dollars, Nell Ruth."

For a minute she ran her forefinger back and forth behind her ear pressing her hair down tight. She pursed her lips a second and then said, "I'll ask my husband." She went cautiously up the

wooden steps again. Her galoshes were unfastened and the zippers tinkled at every step. It was still raining and she drew her shoulders in tight to make sure she kept within the circumference of the silk umbrella.

She was in the house for five or ten minutes, and Vergil and I sat in silence. Presently he switched off the engine and settled in his seat, as though he knew precisely what the procedure would be and just exactly how long it would take. I was so preoccupied with the business that I didn't even roll up the window, but sat watching the rain splash off the sill onto the upholstery and about my feet. When Nell Ruth opened her front door again, I peered up over the brown clay bank and saw two other persons in the shadow behind her. As she stepped down from the porch, I had my first glimpse of this Willie Belle, for she came out onto the porch and sat down in a high-backed rocking chair. She was wearing some sort of gingham wrapper and those carpet slippers she has on upstairs now.

Nell Ruth stuck her head inside my window and said, "No'm. He just don't like me to work out a bit." She shook her head, saying, "You know the men folks."

"Hop in out of the rain, Nell Ruth," I said, pointing to the front seat. And Vergil opened the door. While she was letting down her umbrella and very deliberately closing the car door, I said, "Nell Ruth, I'll give you ten dollars a week to nurse my daughter's baby for the two week's they're visiting me. It's a four-year-old girl who's a perfect angel."

And she looked at me ever so engagingly with her head cocked to one side and a tender smile which seemed to say that one more word about the darling child would leave her in tears. Then quite mechanically, with her head still slightly cocked, her expression grew solemn and she rolled her eyes off in the direction in which Willie Belle sat rocking away on the porch. My eyes followed hers. And before I had time to bring my eyes back from that figure in the faded gingham wrapper, Nell Ruth had said, "Willie Belle

might do it for nine, with car fare." By the time I looked at her again she had begun to loosen her umbrella.

"Do you mean you won't work at any wage?" I said. She put her hand on the door handle and began to open it. She had fastened her eyes on the figure who sat rocking on the porch of the yellow house and staring off into the rain. Nell Ruth stepped onto the running board, and I said, "If Willie Belle comes with me now, I'll give her eight dollars." She stepped firmly down onto the ground from the running board, and my heart sank with the thought of your arriving, my dear, today, and I added, "Plus car fare when I don't send her home." As that black creature in the green sweater was prissing herself up the slick steps, still cautiously, undisturbed by what I had said to her, I didn't know whether she was going to send Willie Belle or not. I watched her movements as though I might be able to discern the answer in them, and I listened to the tinkle of the zipper fasteners on her galoshes. Beyond her I could see Willie Belle still rocking with a cud-chewing motion. She seemed to have no interest in what price, if any, she had brought. The truth is, my dear, they absolutely *have* us for this duration, and we'll have to bear it—for that long. While I watched Nell Ruth go across the yard, carefully avoiding the puddles of water, I said to Vergil, "Vergil, some people will better themselves just so much and no more. Because her husband has a job, that girl won't work." I rolled up my window and resting my head on the back of my seat in exhaustion I said, "We'll wait a minute and see whether or not Willie Belle's coming with us." And Vergil said confidently:

"She'll be along in a minute or so."

HIGH COVER

JOE THOMPSON, JR. (B.A.'41)

October 10, 1943

Dear Mother: [1]

I shall begin this letter to you, although I don't know how long it will be in reaching you, or how much of it may be censored. I have written you once before from my station in Cornwall. This is from the same station. It is a description of what often happens over the channel.

We all piled into a lorry to go to briefing. Not much time, and the show had come up suddenly. Across the drome and into the briefing room. Already it was half filled with pilots. One squadron we had was of Aussies, their dark blue uniforms standing out among the lighter shade of the regular RAF battle dress. You can imagine how my American leather jacket and "operational" Officer's cap must have stood out, in color as well as in height. The Wing Commander (Flying) was standing up front now, in his hand a sheaf of papers . . . behind his back a map of England and of France. Thin strips of tape lined our route to the coast, to the target, out and home again. An escort mission, we were to accompany Bostons on a bombing raid. I had only a moment to think that but for a turn of fate, I might well be flying a Boston, rather than a fighter. The Wing CO gave us the headings, the altitude. We synchronized watches and were out to the lorry again. Dinghy chute and Mae West, and strapped in the plane . . . a few minutes later we taxied out and took off in flurries of whirring props across the aerodrome. Climbing steeply in close formation we slid through the heavy cumulus clouds that were building up on the coast. The squadrons fell into position like clockwork. And the whole vast space of height began to spread out. Across the coast we made one great turn and picked up the bombers.

[1] A letter from Captain Thompson to his mother, Mrs. Joe Thompson, of Nashville.

High and up to our left were other squadrons of top cover. Below there were still other planes. The sky was filled with them, and yet they were all black specks. Distance, even in a protecting formation. And the fact that they are "protecting" speaks for the terrific speed and accuracy of plane and pilot. So there we were, suspended above the channel and moving toward the Fortress of Europe.

Ahead, my No. 1 man dropped his belly tank. I changed over and dropped mine. It tore away from the body of the plane and dropped into the sea. How many such tanks must have fallen here since the war began. Far below and a little to the left was the coast of France. Oxygen came cleanly through my face mask. The tank was still more than half full. With gloved hands I flipped the camera switch and the gun sight. Instruments assured me that the plane was okay. Anything could happen now.

Still we moved toward the target without opposition. The coast was beneath us now. The cliffs looked cut from grey-brown biscuit dough, great smooth swathes and slender peninsulas . . . just as when most of the dough has been cut away, leaving the scraps and trimmings. A city, with white, shining houses and an extensive harbor. All over the sky . . . planes were turning. In near the target, we were still unmolested. Then, just to the right of our two planes, a blob of grey-black smoke . . . about the size of a toy balloon. As I looked there were other bursts around us, near us. One moment an area would appear, the next moment it would be pock-marked with these flak points. Indeed, as I watched a whole lattice appeared as if by magic—beneath, beside, ahead. And yet we just sort of looked and paid no attention. The bursts seemed almost harmless and absurd, out there.

Top cover came roaring over. How nice to have your own planes above. The bombers must be on the target by now. We turned again. Then there was a disturbance to the right. Two of our sections half-rolled and went plummeting down. Enemy planes were below, heading for the formation. Suddenly we were in a round robin, then down with such terrific power that I could feel the pull of the stick against my right arm. An Me 110 flashed past

to the side as we pulled up, and there was a burst of smoke and flame as another burst under pressure of a fighter's cannon fire. Another wheeling turn showed us they had broken off the attack as swiftly as it began, but two of their planes would never make the aerodrome again. As quickly as it started, the skirmish was over and the two of us were climbing toward the coast, minutely examining the sky around us. Over the RT we could hear the squadron reforming, heading out behind us. Already we were across the coast and over the long stretch of water toward our base. The Bostons had long ago left for home.

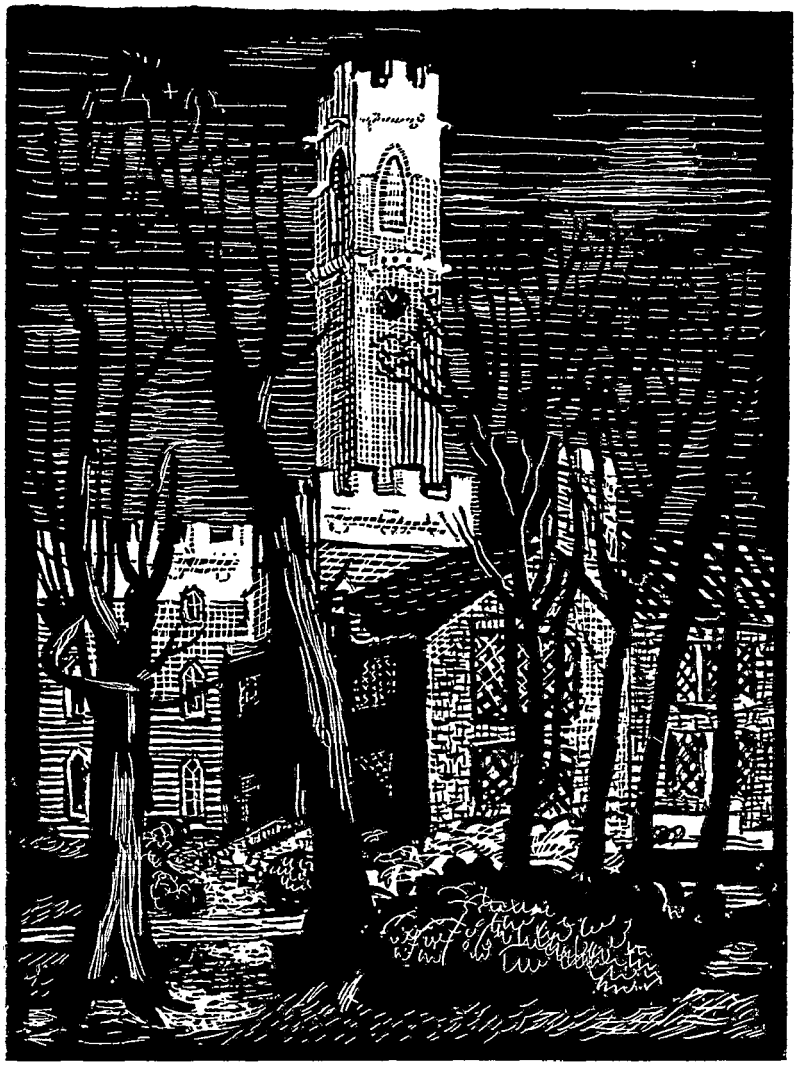
The sea stretched out ahead. A cloud bank, and still, heavy air. We felt relieved, and yet still uneasy. However, nothing seemed to be pursuing. Over the radio there were calls for homings. The boys were coming back.

The petrol still was holding out. There was a great deal of water below. It is necessary to fly over water in a fast plane for a long time before you realize just how much water there is below. Over one cloud bank, we approached another, dived below it to find ourselves just two hundred feet above the soil of good old England. We landed and taxied up. It had been a good day. Several of the boys had another Jerry to their credit. And all of our aircraft returned.

Since this is a sort of special letter, I'll not fill it with other subjects. I am going to send it through our Intelligence, and hope it will get through with no deletions. I believe I have followed safety rules sufficiently. More news soon.

Son Joe (signed)

Examination of my plane upon return showed I had only one bullet hole.



ESSAYS

STILL REBELS, STILL YANKEES

DONALD DAVIDSON (B.A.'17, M.A.'22)

At a meeting of Southern writers in Charleston some years ago, Laurence Stallings looked belligerently around him and expressed an ardent preference for a "Balkanized America." "What I like about Charleston," he said, "is that it has resisted Abraham Lincoln's attempts to put the country into Arrow Collars. If the South had won the war, the country would have had lots more color."

The rebelliousness of Mr. Stallings need not compel us to suspect him of being an unreconstructed Southerner disguised as a man of letters, who is looking for artistic reasons to justify what arms and politics once failed to secure. Discontent with the uniformity of America is common enough; what is not common is the knowledge that this uniformity, a byword ever since James Bryce looked at the American commonwealth through the spectacles of the Gilded Age, is more a myth than a reality.

As a myth, it probably represents the wishful thinking of those who, for their own designs, want America to become uniform. Actually America is not yet uniform; very likely it is less uniform than it once was and far more Balkanized than Mr. Stallings dreams. The unreconstructed Southerners have done their part in keeping it Balkan; but there are unreconstructed Yankees, too, and other unreconstructed Americans of all imaginable sorts, everywhere engaged in preserving their local originality and independence.

The only people who do not know this are certain experts who do most of the current talking about American society. They live in a sociological pickle of statistics and progress. They are eternally looking for what they call "social values," but they strangely confine their research to libraries and graduate "projects" at the larger universities. They avoid the places where social values may be encountered in the flesh. If they stumble upon a living social value,

walking visibly about some spot of earth and drawing its nutriment from a tradition embodied in the houses, speech, crafts, music, folklore, and wisdom of an actual people, their rule is to denounce it as an anachronism and to call for its extermination. For them, nothing must grow according to its nature, but things "develop" by laboratory formulae, which are obtained by inspecting the reactions of the most abnormal and depressed specimens of humankind, too weak to protest against sociological vivisection.

Those of us who still believe in the map of the United States know that it marks the residence of some diverse Americans who had better not go unacknowledged. In Vermont, for instance, are people who are still Yankees; and in Georgia, and elsewhere, there are still Rebels. I remember talking with a certain Virginian who watched a Vermont sunset with me, one summer evening. As the sun passed below the distant Adirondacks, we looked at the Green Mountains around us, and at the trim Vermont fields where all the weeds were flowers and all the grass was hay. In the clear detail of the afterglow we saw the forests of spruce and balsam and maple, and spoke of how the very wilderness, in this New England state, had uprightness and order. The woods were as snug and precise as a Yankee kitchen—no ragged edges, no sprawling, nothing out of place. In the clearings the farmhouses were all painted; and the barns were painted, too. The streams were orthodox streams, almost model streams, with water always translucent and stones rounded and picturesquely placed among moss and ferns. They were often called "brooks"—a word that for Southerners existed only on the printed page.

On this land, the Virginian said, the Yankees had looked so intimately and long that, like the man in Hawthorne's story of the Great Stone Face, they had become the image of what they contemplated. The Yankee genius of Vermont was upright, vertical, and no doubt Puritan. Where the landscape itself enforced consistency and order, how could the people concede much virtue to inconsistency and irregularity? The forebears of the Vermont Yankee had once failed to understand how Southerners could be

devoted both to slavery *and* democracy. That old failure of understanding did not seem queer, or worth more than a passing sigh, to two Southerners who stood looking at sunset upon a land whose gentled wildness suggested the urgent possiblity of a well-ordered universe, cut to a discreet Yankee pattern. But the human geography of America had now become a particolored thing, sprawling across the continent in a crazy-quilt of provinces, or sections, each with its private notion of a universe. No longer, as in the sixties, could the Yankee make bold to set up a general pattern for the entire Union. He had enough to do if he would defend and preserve what was peculiarly his own—his very own, surely, in upper New England. In such a purpose of preservation the two Southerners at last could make bold to sympathize, even to help if possible. But preservation could not be achieved without recognizing a principle of diversity in American life. Only by such means could one make any sense out of Lamar's famous epigram in his eulogy on Sumner, "My countrymen, know one another and you will love one another"; it ceased to have meaning if America was to be subjugated to the ideal of uniformity, or to the ideal universe that some one section might generate.

But how could the principle of diversity be inculcated? On the negative side, certain false images, the product of legend or propaganda, must somehow be counterbalanced. Regrettably enough, some of the fairest legends caused the greatest embarrassment. To the Virginian I recalled the horror of a good lady from the Middle West, who was motoring from Washington to Richmond. Mount Vernon was all right, she thought; there the legend was safely frozen. But beyond, on the road to Richmond, what had become of all the great mansions she had read about, the cotton fields with Negroes carolling, the old gentlemen in goatees and white vests, sipping mint juleps in the shade? They were not visible. There were only a few scattered shacks and tumbledown barns in miles of impenetrable wilderness that looked for all the world as it must have looked when John Smith first invaded it. If she could have encountered the legend, the lady would have been

content. But not seeing it or knowing how to locate it, she was smitten with a housewifely desire to get at this ragged land with a good broom and whisk it into seemliness.

Other sojourners had been anxious to do a far more drastic tidying-up. The Harlan County visitors, the Scottsboro attorneys, the shock troops of Dayton and Gastonia asked no questions about the genius of place. Wherever they went on their missions of social justice, they carried with them a legend of the future, more dangerously abstract than the legend of the past, and sternly demanded that the local arrangements be made to correspond with it, at whatever cost. The local arrangements, indeed, might well bear some mending. And yet the only America that the visitors offered as a model was an overgrown urban America, forever in process of becoming one laboratory experiment after another.

What could be done about all this? Our answers were shrouded in darkness as we walked back to the log fires and good company of a New England inn. The Virginian, after the fashion of good Southerners who do not want to let anybody know the incertainty of their minds under modern conditions, did not propose any answer. Instead, he told several good stories. They were his courteous and delightful way of saying that he was being pounded between his own unyielding loyalty and the howling respectability of the great world.

If any answer is to be found, if anything positive is to be done, it must surely be through a laborious process of discovering America all over again. When one looks at America, not to see how it does or does not fit the synthetic ideals proposed for its future, but only with the modest purpose of detecting the realities—let us say the social values—that persist in local habitations, he soon realizes that comparisons are more fruitful than condemnations. More specifically, when one has the good fortune to go directly from a summer in Vermont to an autumn and winter in Middle Georgia, he forms a clear picture of sectional differences. This picture is not in the least favorable to the notion that the diverse America of the

Rebels and Yankees is in any immediate danger of being submerged.

If on coming to Vermont I had consulted the modern legend of New England that vaguely haunted my mind, I would have received the iconoclastic shock which our advanced thinkers argue is the first step toward salvation. Had not a New England migrant to the South assured me that his ancestral acres were now inhabited by Montenegrins, who had turned them into a goat farm? Had not the sepulchral Eugene O'Neill and others told tales of the poverty and decadence of New England life? The farms were deserted, it was said; the immigrants and mill-towns had come; the Yankees had left for parts unknown, or remaining, had become degenerate. Even the loyalty of Robert Frost gave no comfortable assurance, if one accepted the New York alec's criticism of *North of Boston;* though there were many wistful asides in which Frost put forth the guarded wisdom of a not yet daunted soul. The New England of Whittier and Webster was supposed to be extinct; it had been replaced by Puritan-baiters and F. Scott Fitzgeraldites who drank cocktails and read Proust when not conducting the insurance business of the United States.

But if the Vermont that I saw was in the least representative of New England, this composite picture was a wild detraction. In Vermont, if nowhere else, a New England like that of Whittier and Webster miraculously persisted, a reality capable of reducing a Southerner almost to despairing envy. I could understand what led Walter Hines Page, a quarter of a century ago, to disparage his native North Carolina and fall in love with New England. But the time was past when one needed to disparage or praise in the interest of the America Page dreamed about, for in the nineteen-thirties it seemed impossible of realization, or, where realized, already past saving. To one who did not accept Lincoln's quaint idea that the United States must become "all one thing or all the other," it seemed more than ever true that the unity of America must rest, first of all, on a decent respect for sectional differences.

If Vermont and Georgia could be taken in a broad way to stand for New England and the Deep South, one could easily trace out

the most general differences. The Vermont towns, like the Vermont landscape, were swept and garnished, as if the Day of Judgment might at any moment summon them into the presence of the celestial inspector. They looked as if Vermonters lived by the adage "Handsome is as handsome does," and one could reflect that this proverb might well have issued from some collaborative effort of Poor Richard and Jonathan Edwards. The most delightful of Southern towns was almost certain to mix a little squalor with its grandeurs. Here, what a Southerner most particularly noticed was the neatly painted aspect of everything, the absence of ramshackle buildings and litter, the white steeples of churches, the shipshapeness of streets, yards, garages, barber shops, and public buildings. By some special benison of God and the New England conscience, not a billboard had been allowed to sprout between Bennington and the Canadian border. Perhaps by the same double grace, not a weed sprouted, either. All the weeds had turned into ferns and buttercups. Vermont farms were Currier and Ives prints of what good farms ought to look like, with orchards and brooks in exactly the right place and gates that did not need mending. In the background were lakes and mountains where one would put them if he were Aladdin or Wordsworth. It was not surprising to be told that hardly a poison snake, and no poison ivy, existed in the State of Vermont; or to find that there were excellent trails running the whole length of the Green Mountains, with finger-posts at every wilderness crossroads, and tin huts, with beds, firewood, and caretaker, atop of the highest peak. A few nagging irregularities of nature, like blackflies and mosquitoes, seemed really blasphemous in a land to which God had given a monopoly of all things good and precise. No wonder, with all this beneficence around them, that the Yankees remembered the *Mayflower* and forgot John Smith, honored Bunker Hill and neglected King's Mountain. If they could claim such priority in the benevolence of God, their proprietary feeling toward the Revolutionary War, and their almost hereditary claim to the direction of the United States government

were by comparison insignificant appurtenances, theirs as a matter of course and by general presumption.

Although I did not hold very devotedly to the economic determinism of modern historians, it was a temptation to say that the people were a great deal like the land. There was the climate, which put keenness into a Southerner's veins. Summer was short, and one had to make the most of it; winter was severe, and one had to keep shield and buckler perpetually ready against it—in that matter was God benevolent or ruthless? Short summers and cold winters made the Vermont Yankee frugal and careful. He must watch his corners. If he were caught napping, he would perish. So much and no more was the gift of his seasons; so much and no more was the rule of his nature. And one had to watch over his neighbor as well as work with him if the general security were not to be imperilled by some outrageous letting down of bars. Very likely, the New England civic conscience derived as much from the imperatives of climate as from the Puritan tradition; the one egged on the other.

No great check had ever been put upon the development of qualities that the Southerners recognized as ineradicably Yankee. History had been as kind to the Yankee as God had been kind. Since Revolutionary times no great sudden change had ever swept over these peaceful towns and this quiet landscape. Industrialism had come slowly and somewhat agreeably upon a people who had the ingenuity to use it and the moral force to make it behave. How could they who thought they knew how to tame the monster realize that he might walk unshackled and ravening elsewhere? The Yankees, indeed, had never tasted defeat. Since Burgoyne's expedition no invader had come upon them to ravage and destroy. They had freed the Negroes, replying "I can" to Duty's "Thou must"; but they were fortunately exempt from the results of emancipation, for no Negroes lived among them to acquaint them with the disorder of unashamed and happy dirt. One knew that a slum in New England would be a well-managed slum, and that New Englanders would comprehend Secretary Perkins's horror at the lack of plumb-

ing in unreformed America and her notion of saving the barefoot South by building shoe factories. For in New England humanitarianism was the natural flower of good sense. In a land where everything was so right, it was hard to imagine a perverse land where so much could be so wrong without disturbing either a people's composure or their happiness.

But in the plantation country of Middle Georgia the social values required a different yardstick. The genius of Georgia was stretched out, relaxed and easy, in keeping with the landscape, which required a large and horizontal view of mundane affairs. The Georgian assumed that God would have sense and heart enough to take into consideration, when Judgment Day came around, a good deal besides external and man-made appearances. God was a gentleman, indeed, who would certainly know, without being told, that one was a person, a somebody, doing his best among some rather amazing arrangements that had better not be talked about too much. The climate might or might not predispose the Georgia Rebel to laziness; the fact was, he worked and fretted more than the Yankee knew. But the Rebel idea was never to *seem* to work and fret. You must not let your work ride you, was the saying. In plain truth, you did not need to. The land was bountiful, and the Lord would provide, and in event of the Lord's failure or displeasure, you could always fall back on your kinfolks.

Where the seasons were all mixed up, so that autumn merged into spring without any sharp demarcation, and you might have a dubious summer in the middle of winter, it became almost a point of honor not to worry too much about provision. There was no need to watch corners when something was growing all the time. Almost anything would grow in Middle Georgia, and almost everything did grow, including weeds whose invasions could not possibly be repelled from every roadside and ditch if they were to be kept out of cotton and corn.

The Georgia landscape had a serene repose that lulled a man out of all need of conscience. It was anything but swept and garnished. It could be mild or majestic or genial and savage depending on

what view you got of pines against red earth, or Negro cabins underneath their chinaberry trees, or sedge grass running into gullies and thence to impenetrable swamps, or deserted mansions lost in oak groves and magnolias. Rivers were muddy and at times unrestrained; they got out of bounds, as all things natural did here. In the pine barrens you might get an impression of desolation and melancholy; but things could grow lushly too, with the overpowering vegetable passion that harrowed the Puritan soul of Amy Lowell, when she visited the Magnolia Gardens at Charleston. But finally, it was a well-tilled country, where you were forever seeing the Negro and his mule against the far horizon, or the peach orchards bursting into an intoxicating pink.



The seasons were full of charms and intimidations. Spring, with its dogwood blossoms and soft airs, might deliver a tornado or a flood; summer, full of grown corn and harvest ease, might turn into dusty drouth. The woods that lured you to enter and gave nuts and flowers for the taking were full of hidden terrors. Sit on a mossy bank without precaution, and in a few hours you might be on fire with chigoe bites. Stoop to pick a flower, and you might find a rattlesnake. Indoors the housewife had to fight cockroaches and flies; outdoors were hawks, polecats, weasels, 'possums, coons, and other varmints to harry the henhouse. Precision, for the Georgian, must rank among the Utopian virtues. If New England encouraged man to believe in an ordered universe, Georgia—and a good deal of the South besides—compelled

him to remember that there were snakes in Eden. Nature, so ingratiating and beautiful, which bound the Georgian to his land with a love both possessive and fearful, was a fair but dreadful mistress, unpredictable and uncontrollable as God. The New Englander knew exactly where to find nature harsh and nature yielding, and he could make his arrangements accordingly. But the Georgian never knew. His safest policy was to relax, and he readily developed a great degreee of tolerance for irregularity in nature and man. At his lowest level, this quality made him lackadaisical and trifling. In this he differed from the New England Yankee, who became a perfectionist, and then at his worst might turn into zealot, strangely intolerant even while, as idealist, he argued for tolerance.

History, like God and nature, had been both generous and unkind to Georgia and the South. The Georgia Rebel must approach his early history through a bloody link of war and reconstruction that was hazy and bygone to the Vermont Yankee. Defeat had possessed him and had rubbed deep into his wounds. Around him were the visible reminders of destruction and humiliation. His land had been ravaged and rebuilt, and he had been told to forget. But he would not and could not forget, and was therefore torn between his loyalty and his awareness that the great world was bored with his not forgetting. He had been rebuked for being inept at administering a newfangled government that he did not understand or like any too well, and in which he had been allowed to participate only by a kind of negligent afterthought. Turning desperately to the industrial civilization against which he had once taken arms, he had played it as a hedge against the problematic future. Though agrarian at heart, he had been forced to wonder whether the ingenious Yankee might not be right after all.

Thus he remembered the faith and hankered after the fleshpots at the same time. But industrialism, declining to be treated as a mere hedge, began Sherman's march to the sea all over again. It piled ugliness upon wreckage and threw the old arrangements out of kilter. The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Kiwanis Club flourished side by side. Mule-wagon and automobile,

fundamentalism and liberalism, education and illiteracy, aristocratic pride and backwoods independence disproved the axiom that two bodies cannot occupy the same space. Cities that preserved the finest flavor of the old regime had to be approached over brand-new roads where billboards, tourist camps, filling stations, and factories broke out in a modernistic rash among the water oaks and Spanish moss. And everywhere was the Negro, a cheerful grinning barnacle tucked away in all the tender spots of Southern life, not to be removed without pain, not to be cherished without tragedy. The Georgian, when reproached for his intolerance, told himself that actually nobody outdid him in fond tolerance of the Negro. Lynchings, the work of hot-heads and roustabouts, were regrettable; but what did a few lynchings count in the balance against the continual forbearance and solicitude that the Georgian felt he exercised toward these amiable children of cannibals, whose skins by no conceivable act of Congress or educational program could be changed from black to white. The presence of the Negro, which had its advantages in agriculture and domestic service, made the Georgian's life both comfortable and ramshackle; it gave him devoted servants and social problems, cheap labor and hideous slums, an endless flow of folklore and anecdote, and eternal apprehension for the future. But in his own way, the Georgian respected the Negro, as another irregularity, taking a human and personal form, that had somehow to be lived with. He distrusted all ready-made prescriptions for bringing about regularity. In Georgia, life went along horizontally: you never crossed a bridge until you came to it—and maybe not then.

But sociologists not only cross bridges; they build all imaginable kinds of new ones. The picture of America, as sociologically reformed, does not contemplate any great concessions to Yankee uprightness or Rebel relaxation. Indeed, the sociologist, armed with science, is ready to follow reformation with transformation. In the vast inevitable working of the social forces, sectional differences become irrelevant. With a cold smile the sociologist pro-

nounces a death sentence upon Rebel and Yankee alike. Not that they matter very much—but they will have to yield!

When he talks like this, I am perversely compelled to remember the individuals I have seen, Brother Jonathan of Vermont and Cousin Roderick of Georgia, whom I cannot imagine as yielding to the puny weapons flourished by our social philosophers. They are local incarnations of the Old Adam. They are the immovable bodies that can furnish the irresistible social forces with an incalculable meeting. They are human beings, undebatably alive; and they are different.

Brother Jonathan lives in Yankeetown—for a place-name is often a "town" in New England, and less often a "ville" or a "burg" as in the South. He is a wizened little chip of a man, with blue eyes and a bald head, and he looks frail enough for any northwest wind to blow away. But there is not a wind on this planet strong enough to blow Brother Jonathan off his mountain farm. If any wind contrived to do so, he would climb right back again in the matter-of-fact way that Robert Frost describes in *Brown's Descent*—he would "bow with grace to natural law, and then go round it on his feet."

Brother Jonathan is past seventy years, and his wife Priscilla is well over sixty, but between them they still manage to do most of the daily work, in house and field, for a two-hundred-acre farm, most of which is in woodland and meadow. Nathaniel, their adopted son, helps some now and then; but Nathaniel, who is carpenter, mechanic, cabinet-maker, mountain guide, and tax collector combined, is busy putting up the new house into which he and Sophronia, his wife, will soon move—they are building it extra large, to take in summer boarders. Sophronia helps Priscilla as much as she can, but she has her own small children to look after. Later on, Brother Jonathan hopes to get a twelve-year-old boy from the orphanage, who will do the chores for his keep. But now Brother Jonathan must be up at daylight to start the kitchen fire and milk the cows. If it is haying-time, he is out in the meadow early with the mowing-machine, which he has sharpened and greased with

his own hands, or repaired at his own smithy if it needs repairing. The mower bumps and clicks through the rough meadow, tossing the little man to and fro as he warily skirts the outcrops of stone that will have to be circled with a scythe to get the last wisp of hay.

Later, he changes the patient old horse from mower to wagon and starts in with pitchfork. It is a sight to see him navigating the loaded wagon from the upper field to the barn, past jutting boulders and through deep ruts. But his pace is easy; he keeps it up all day without undue perspiration or agony, and after supper cuts his wood and milks his cows again in unruffled calm. He does not seem tired or bored. As he milks, he philosophizes to the listening stranger. Yes, times are not what they were, but a man can get along if he will be careful and honest. Foolish people, of course, never know how to manage. The harm all comes from people of no character that do things without regard to common decency. The stars are shining when he takes the pails of milk into the kitchen. Under the hanging oil lamp he reads the *Burlington Free Press* or *The Pathfinder* until he begins to nod.

All the arrangements on Brother Jonathan's farm are neat and ingenious—the arrangements of a man who has had to depend largely on his own wits and strength. The barn is cleverly arranged in two stories, with a ramp entering the upper story for the convenience of Brother Jonathan and his hay wagons, and running water on the lower story, for the convenience of the animals. One well, near the barn, is operated by a windmill; it supplies the stock. Another well, higher up, supplies the house, for Brother Jonathan has a bathroom in the upper hall and faucets in the kitchen. He has no telephone or electric lights. A man can dig and pipe his own wells, and they are finished; but telephone and electric lights, not being home contrivances, require a never-ending tribute to Mammon. He has his own saw-mill and his own work-shop, where he can mend things without losing time and money on a trip to the village. His garage occupied at present by Nathaniel's four-year-old car (which is not being used!), contains a carpenter's bench and

a small gas engine rigged to do sawing and turning. There are pelts drying on the walls.

The house is built to economize space and retain heat. For all its modest proportions, it is convenient and comfortable. The kitchen is spacious and well-equipped. The pantry and cellar are stored with vegetables, fruits, and meats that Priscilla has put up with her own hands. The dining-room, with its long table covered with spotless oil-cloth, is eating-room, living-room, and children's playground combined. Here all gather after supper: the women with their tatting and embroidery; the lively dark-eyed boy from the village, with his home-made fiddle; a summer boarder or two, or a visiting relative; and always Brother Jonathan with his newspaper. In one corner is a reed organ, on which Brother Jonathan occasionally plays hymns. In another corner is a desk, filled with miscellaneous papers, books, and old magazines. On the walls hang a glass frame containing butterflies, the gift of a wandering entomologist; an 1876 engraving of General Washington being welcomed at New York, with the pictures of all the Presidents, up to Hayes, around the border; and a faded photograph of a more youthful Brother Jonathan with his fellow baggage-clerks, taken in the days when he went west and got a job in Chicago. Brother Jonathan talks of Chicago sometimes, but he never reveals why he, unlike many other Yankees, came back to Vermont.

The temper of the household is a subdued and even pleasantness, which the loud alarms and excursions of the world do not penetrate very far. The progress of Nathaniel's new house; the next morning's arrangements for gathering vegetables and canning; what Brother Jonathan shall say in the speech he is to make at the approaching celebration of the Timothys' golden wedding—such topics take precedence over the epic contentions of Mr. Hoover and Mr. Roosevelt. Priscilla may go so far as to marvel that anybody can doubt the goodness of Mr. Hoover. (She does not add, as she well might, that Mr. Roosevelt, as a "Yorker," inherits the distrust of Vermont.) Or Brother Jonathan may warm up to politics enough to announce his everlasting distrust for liquorish Al Smith and to

confess that, out of firm disapproval for vice, he has once or twice bolted the Republican ticket and voted for the Prohibition party's candidate. But in the South, he supposes, he would be as good a Democrat as the next one. They are all curious about the South—about Negroes—and whether the Southern people still have hard feelings against the North (on this point they seem a little anxious and plaintive). But the talk soon shifts to the Green Mountain Boys, from one of whom Brother Jonathan is descended, or to stories of his childhood, when bears were as thick as porcupines are now—he tells of how seven bears were once killed in the same tree. In these stories Brother Jonathan may put in a dry quip or two, by way of garnishment. He has a store of homely jokes and extended metaphors, to which he frequently adds a humorous gloss to be sure the stranger gets the point. Then maybe there is a game of anagrams—or on another evening, a corn-roast, with a few cronies and kinfolks from the village, who talk the clipped Yankee-talk that seems, to Southern ears, as pure an English as can be, with only a little of the twang that dialect stories have taught one to expect.

Brother Jonathan is not dogmatic to the point of testiness, but he is firmly rationalistic on many points. He declares it incredible, for instance, that Catholics can believe in transubstantiation—how can bread and wine *actually* turn into the blood and body of Jesus Christ? Yet oddly enough, Brother Jonathan is neither Congregationalist nor Unitarian, but Methodist, and does not mind repeating the Apostles' Creed, with its formidable references to the Trinity and the Resurrection. I am led to suspect that it is not the doctrine but the authority to which Brother Jonathan is temperamentally hostile. He is used to depending on himself; he does not like to be told things. And his independence is of a piece with the whole conduct of his life. Years ago, when a famous local character eccentrically bought up all the surrounding woodland and farm land and turned it into a forest reserve which he bequeathed to a neighboring college, Brother Jonathan did not sell out. He held on then, he holds on now, with a possessiveness that would be the despair of Communists. He will continue to hold on, as long

as trees yield maple syrup—which he will never, never basely dilute with cane syrup—and boarders return summer after summer.

For Brother Jonathan belongs in spirit to the old republic of independent farmers that Jefferson wanted to see flourish as the foundation of liberty in the United States. To conserve that liberty he has his own Yankee arrangements: the "town," which the Southerner had to learn consisted of a village and a great deal of contiguous territory up to the next "town-line"; and the town meeting at which Brother Jonathan could stand up and tell the government what he thought about it. Of the uses of town meetings Priscilla has something to say, which comes, I reflect, with a little feminine sauciness. A certain individual, she relates, was criticized for not painting the "community house," as he had been employed to do; and when he excused himself on the ground that paint was lacking, his own wife sprang up in the town meeting and cried: "Don't believe a word he says. That paint's setting in the cellar this minute!"

But the Southerner could reflect that such family intimacy might have civic advantages. Brother Jonathan's local government is composed of nobody more Olympic or corrupt than his own neighbors and relations. For him it is not something off yonder, and he visualizes the national government (though a little too innocently) as simply an enlarged town meeting, where good management ought to be a matter of course. In Yankeetown, good management is a matter of course: it maintains a library, it looks after roads, it sees that taxes are paid and well spent. If the State government does not behave, Nathaniel himself will run for the legislature and see that it does behave.

In all this there was much for a Southerner to savor curiously and learn about—as he savored and learned about the strange food that appeared on Brother Jonathan's table: doughnuts for breakfast, maple syrup on pie and cereal, the New England boiled dinner, the roasting ears that were really roasted in the old Indian fashion. Just as Brother Jonathan's menu suited the soil and the people, so his tidiness and responsibility suited the unobtrusive integrity of his

character. With emphasis, one could say: Vermont is upright, vertical, and, even yet, Puritan—why not?

And almost two thousand miles away, with an unconcern about the state of the world that parallels but differs from Brother Jonathan's, Cousin Roderick of Rebelville is achieving another salvation somehow not recorded in the auguries of socialistic planning. Autumn is beginning, the scuppernongs are ripe, and he invites everybody to come over and join him in the scuppernong arbor. In the late afternoon a merry crew gather around the great vine, laughing and bantering as they pick the luscious grapes and crush them against their palates. Sister Caroline is there, with a figure as trim and a wit as lively at eighty as it must have been at twenty. Young Cousin Hector and his wife are there—they are "refugeeing" from the industrial calamity that overtook them in a Northern city. And there are numerous other vague cousins and sisters and children, all munching and passing family gossip back and forth between bites. Cousin Roderick's own Dionysian laughter goes up heartiest of all among the leaves, as he moves to and fro, rapidly gathering grapes and pressing them upon the visitors. "Oh, you are not going to quit on us," he says. "You must eat more than *that*. Scuppernongs never hurt a soul." The scuppernong vine, he declares, is a hundred years old and nearly always fruitful. But not so old, never so fruitful, puts in Sister Caroline, as the scuppernong vine at the old place, that as barefoot children they used to clamber over.

Then the meeting is adjourned to Cousin Roderick's great front porch, where one looks out between white columns at sunset clouds piling up into the deep blues and yellows of a Maxfield Parrish sky. Down the long street of Rebelville, between the mighty water oaks set out by Cousin Roderick's kin after the Confederate War, the cotton wagons are passing, heaped high with the white mass of cotton and a Negro or two atop, and the talk goes on, to the jingle of trace chains and the clop of mule hoofs on the almost brand-new State highway, which is so much better for rubber tires than mule hoofs. Over yonder lives Cousin Roderick's Aunt Cecily,

a widow, the single indomitable inhabitant of a stately mansion where economics has not yet prevailed against sentiment. Next door is Uncle Burke Roderick, a Confederate veteran who at ninety still drives his horse and buggy to the plantation each morning; he is the last survivor of three brothers who were named Pitt, Fox, and Burke, after their father's eighteenth-century heroes. All around, indeed, are the Roderick kin, for Cousin Roderick, whose mother married a Bertram, bears the family name of his mother's people, a numerous clan who, by dint of sundry alliances and ancient understandings, attend to whatever little matters need attention in the community affairs of Rebelville, where Jefferson's "least government" principle is a matter of course. Before supper, or after, some of the kinfolks may drop in, for there is always a vast deal of coming and going and dropping in at Cousin Roderick's.

As he takes his ease on the porch, Cousin Roderick looks to be neither the elegant dandy nor the out-at-elbows dribbler of tobacco juice that partisans have accredited to the Southern tradition. He is a fairly tall, vigorous man, plainly dressed, with the ruddiness of Georgia sun and good living on his face. His eyes are a-wrinkle at the corners, ready to catch the humor of whatever is abroad. His hand fumbles his pipe as he tells one anecdote after another in the country drawl that has about as much of Mark Twain and Sut Lovengood in it as it has of the elisions and flattenings supposed to belong to Southern patrician speech. In fact, though he is really patrician (as the female members of his family can assure you) he does not look anything like the Old Colonel of legend, and in spirit he, too, belongs to the Jeffersonian constituency. He has some of the bearing of an English squire, and a good deal of the frontier heartiness that Augustus Baldwin Longstreet depicted in *Georgia Scenes*. He assumes that the world is good-humored and friendly until it proves itself otherwise. If it does prove otherwise, there is a glint in his eye that tells you he will fight.

Cousin Roderick is the opposite of Chaucer's Man of Law, who ever seemed busier than he was. Cousin Roderick is busier than he

seems. His air of negligence, like his good humor, is a philosophical defense against the dangerous surprises that life may turn up. Really, he is not negligent. He does not work with his own hands, like Brother Jonathan, or his Southern brothers of upcountry and bluegrass; but in the past he has worked a-plenty with his hands and knows how it should be done. On his several tracts of land, the gatherings of inheritance and purchase, are some one hundred and fifty Negroes whom he furnishes housing, food, and a little money; they do his labor—men, women, children together—they are his "hands." He is expected to call them by name, to get them out of jail, to doctor them, even sometimes to bury them when "lodge dues" may have lapsed. They are no longer his slaves; but though they do not now utter the word, they do not allow him to forget that he has the obligations of a master.

As Cousin Roderick makes the "rounds" of his fields—no more on horseback, as of old, but in a battered Chevrolet—he sets forth his notions of economy. As for the depression, that is no new thing in Rebelville. People here have got used to ruination. After the Confederate War came Reconstruction; after Reconstruction, Tom Watson and the Populist turmoil of the nineties; a while later, the peach boom, and its collapse; then the Florida boom, with its devastations; and now, this new depression. Like most of his kin, Cousin Roderick has simply retreated into the old plantation economy. He tells how, when he was a young fellow, just beginning to take charge, his father came out to the plantation one day and asked for a ham. Cousin Roderick explained that hogs were up to a good price; he had sold the entire lot, on the hoof, and had good money in the bank. "Sir," said the old man, "let me never again catch you without hams in your smokehouse and corn in your crib. You've got to make this land take care of itself." "And that," says Cousin Roderick, "is what I aim to do." From the land he feeds his own family, the hundred and fifty Negroes, and the stock. Whatever is left, when taxes and upkeep are deducted, is the profit. Anything that grows, he will plant: asparagus, peaches, pecans, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and of course the great staple crops,

grain, hay, and cotton. Especially cotton, for no matter how low the price, cotton is money. It is ridiculous, he thinks, to talk of getting people who are hard-up for money to reduce cotton acreage. For his part, Cousin Roderick intends to make every bale his land will produce. But if cotton fails, he still can sell cattle, or cabbage, or timber from his baronial holdings. Land is the only abiding thing, the only assurance of happiness and comfort. He wants more land, not less.

One suspects that Cousin Roderick, however hard-pressed he may be at the bank, is fundamentally right. If he is not right, how does he manage, in these times, to send a daughter to college, and entertain his friends, and keep a cheerful face before the world? The portraits of his ancestors, looking down from their frames above great-grandfather's sideboard or his wife's new grand piano, eternally assure Cousin Roderick that he is right. They won this Eden of sandy earth and red clay where all things grow with a vigor that neither winter nor drouth can abate. Not soon, not soon will their son give it up.

To the designs of experts who want to plan people's lives for them, Cousin Roderick gives no more than the indulgent attention of a naturally kind-hearted man. He reads the anxious thunderings of the young men who reproduce, in the *Macon Telegraph,* the remote dynamitical poppings of the *New Republic,* and is unmoved; the young men are like the mockingbird who sat on the cupola of the courthouse while court was in session and so learned to sing: *Prisoner-look-upon-the-jury! Jury-look-upon-the-prisoner!* GUILTY! GUILTY! GUILTY! It is a little incredible that so much planning should need to be done. Don't people know how they want to live? As for politics, long since it became tawdry and uncertain. Politics is for lawyers. Cousin Roderick would no more think of running for the legislature than he would think of moving to China. In that, perhaps, he lamentably differs from his ancestors. But in Rebelville political action is generally no more than a confirmation of what has been talked around among the clans. If you really want things done, you speak quietly to Cousin So-and-So

and others that pass the word to everybody that counts. And then something is done.

In Rebelville the politics and economics of the bustling world become a faint whisper. All that matters is to see one's friends and relatives and pass from house to house, from field to field, under Georgia skies; to gather at a simple family dinner where only three kinds of bread and four kinds of meat are flanked by collards, sweet potatoes, corn, pickles, fruits, salads, jams, and cakes; or at a barbecue for fifty or more, for which whole animals are slaughtered and, it would seem, entire pantries and gardens desolated; or to sit with the wise men in front of the store, swapping jokes and telling tales hour after hour; or to hunt for fox, 'possum, coon, and quail, in swamp and field; or (for the ladies) to attend meetings of U. D. C.'s, D. A. R.'s, and Missionary Societies; or church service, or district conference, or the tender ceremonies of Confederate Memorial Day, or the high-school entertainment; or to hear the voices of Negroes, sifting through the dusk, or the mockingbird in moonlight; or to see the dark pines against sunset, and the old house lifting its columns far away, calling the wanderer home. The scuppernongs are gone, and cotton is picked. But already the pecans are falling. And planting begins again while late roses and chrysanthemums are showing, and, even in the first frosts, the camellias are budding, against their December flowering. What though newspapers be loud, and wars and rumors threaten—it is only an academic buzzing, that one must yet tolerate for manners' sake. Sowing and harvest go together, and summer runs into winter, and in Georgia one is persuaded to take the horizontal view.

By some it may be said that dark clouds hang over Yankeetown and Rebelville—and clouds of menace, maybe of destruction. I do not deny their presence, but my story is not of such clouds. In this strange modern world it may be observed that men talk continually of the good life without producing a specimen of it, to convince an inquirer. Brother Jonathan and Cousin Roderick do not talk about the good life. They lead it. If government is intended to serve human interests, what does it propose to do about them? If science

is really intelligent, what does it mean by conniving to put a stigma upon them or to destroy them? I cannot believe that a government or a science which ignores or depreciates them is very trustworthy. I believe that government and science will fail unless they are taken into account. They, and others, are the incarnations of the principle of diversity through which the United States have become something better than Balkan, and without which the phrase "my country" is but a sorry and almost meaningless abstraction.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE SOUTH

CLEANTH BROOKS (B.A.'28)

One of the prices of democracy and democratic education is that you want to speak like everybody else. And one of the ills of isolation—one, if you like, of the limitations of the provincial—is that you are nervous, or may become so, as to what is done in the great world outside. It follows, therefore, with regard to the South and Southern people, that sometimes they are not sure of themselves, that they abandon too readily their own guns, and are apt to be defenseless before accusations that are mainly limited, if not even ignorant. It is not necessary to speak a language that is archaic and out of tone with our present world. But, on the other hand, we are not obliged to be exactly like the general mass spread over the entire United States; nor must we, on a lower plane, seek that generalization of speech that represents everybody who is not anybody. Within limits, it is a good thing to speak your own way, the way of your own part of the world. It follows, therefore, that it is not a bad idea to look into the background of your inherited speech, with the mingled purposes of justification, defense, and, if need be, compromise. Tone of voice is one thing and so is rhythm. The present article is about the language spoken.

A Southern pronunciation—lumping it all together, despite the fact that in the South there are many different ways of speaking—is usually thought to have emanated from the Negro; on the lips of a Virginia girl, pleasantly quaint, like other relics of the influence of the Negro mammy, but corrupt English after all. This popular belief has from time to time acquired the dignity of publication. Dr. Embree, for example, in his *Brown America* unhesitatingly attributes the Virginia lady's accent to the influence of the Negro. The origins of Southern speech, however, cannot be accounted for under a theory of Negro influence. Moreover, Southern English is not a corrupt form of "standard English." To make this point

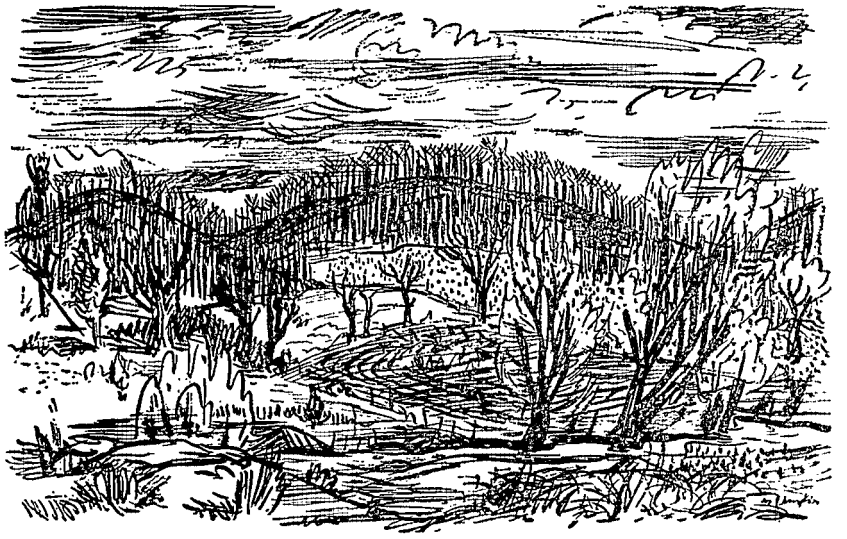
is to raise a number of questions with regard to the criterion of correct English—questions which divers people with their dogmatic assumptions on the subject never take into account.

In the first place, the speech of the Southern states represents an older form of English than that which is found in standard British English today. Indeed, it conforms rather closely to the description which A. J. Ellis gave in the last century of the behavior of the speech of a colony. The speech of a colony is conservative. It is in the language of the mother country that innovations are made. For example, few people other than professional students of the language know that the so-called broad *a,* heard in the British pronunciation of words like *path, staff, last,* and *dance,* is a later form than the vowel that is usually met with in these words in America. The broad *a,* most scholars agree, did not become fashionable in England until late in the eighteenth century. The settlement of America by Englishmen began early in the seventeenth. Obviously, the form used by Englishmen today could not have been the pronunciation carried over by the seventeenth century colonists.

It can be said that a large part of the United States is capable of making criticisms of Southern speech that are merely refined criticism; for the speech of other sections of this country is in its origins also seventeenth century English. Such criticisms are usually based on a hazy assumption that present "standard British" (the speech of the educated classes in London) is "correct," and that the nearer American speech approximates this, the more nearly correct it is. The assumption is not necessarily true, and only ignorance and fear can make us think so. What we can say, however, is that if American English is based originally on seventeenth century English, the South has clung more tenaciously to these original forms than have other parts of the country. Indeed, many of the pronunciations which are usually regarded as specifically "Negro" represent nothing more than older native English forms. The pronunciation, for example, of *get* as "git," so widespread in America and certainly not confined to the Negro, was the standard English form in the eighteenth century; and the pronunciation of *yellow* as "yal-uh" was

also the polite eighteenth century pronunciation. Examples could be multiplied. To give only a few: *boil* pronounced as "bile"; *oblige* as "obleege"; *china* as "chainy." The so-called dropping of the *g* in final *-ing* as in "darlin'" for *darling* was perfectly correct in England itself in the eighteenth century, not to mention its practice nowadays by the British upper classes.

You will hear pronunciations in the South, however, which do not go back to any pronunciation in earlier *standard* English. This does not mean that they originated on our side of the Atlantic.



They represent forms from the provincial dialects—pronunciations which occurred in the dialects of certain parts of England but which did not, as such dialectal forms occasionally did, obtain a footing in the standard language. These dialect forms are of great importance because they offer a possible means for determining the regions in England from which came the colonists who set the speech pattern of the South. Joel Chandler Harris has Uncle Remus pronounce *until, unsettle,* etc., as "awn-til," "awn-settle," etc. *Un-* is still pronounced "awn" by dialect speakers in Devon. Uncle Remus pronounces *corner* as "cawnduh," inserting a *d* in it. The living dialects of Somerset and Devon give the same form. When Uncle

Remus pronounces *whether,* he leaves out the *th,* but so do the dialects of Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, and Devon. Again, the word *seven* is frequently heard in the South as "sebn," but the same form occurs in a number of dialects of England, including those of the southwest. In the southwest of England, "gwine" occurs for *going.* Even the dropping of a final *d* as in *told,* "tole, or in *hand,* "han'," or of a final *t* as in *last,* "las'," is not a corruption. If it is a corruption at all, it is one which probably came into this country by passage across the Atlantic. Such forms are the regular developments in many of the living dialects of Great Britain.

As a matter of fact, a number of words in the South which appear to be new words entirely, represent in their origin merely dialectal forms of standard English: *roil* is a purely literary word, but "rile," which is related to it in the same way as "bile" to *boil,* is common. "Ingun" is a variant of *onion,* still to be found in many of the counties of England and Scotland. The word "frail," used in the South in the sense of a severe beating (I'm going to *frail* the life out of him") has no relation to *frail* in the sense of "fragile." It is a development of *flail* which has occurred in many of the provincial dialects of Great Britain. The word "rare" as used in the phrase "rarin' to go" is related to the word *rear* in the same way that "quare" is related to *queer.* Both "rare" and "quare" are widely distributed through the dialects of Great Britain. "Peart" is a development of *pert* and must have been brought across the Atlantic by the early settlers, for it still exists in a number of English counties.

In this connection one may point out that the Southern *r* is connected with the south of England as well as with the Southern states of America. In this part of England the consonant *r* was lost very early, before consonants and at the end of words. From the seventeenth century onward this development had penetrated the standard language, and this treatment of *r,* far from being a slurring or a corruption, is the treatment standard in British English today. It is the normal treatment also in some other parts of America—eastern New England, for example. On the western edges of the Southern states, Midwestern influence has come in, bringing the *r*

with it; in the mountain regions of the South also (under Scotch-Irish influence?) the *r* is preserved.

As one instance after another of Southern speech traces itself back to England, either to earlier standard English or to provincialisms of the south and southwest counties, it rapidly becomes apparent that any theory of Negro influence must be abandoned. The Negro learned his speech from the colonists, who must have come predominantly from the English southwest. The Negro has then preserved many of these original forms, even after most of the whites have discarded them. This is not to state, of course, that Uncle Remus speaks the dialect of Hardy's peasants. But the fact that his dialect, wherever it deviates from modern British English, differs together along *with* the dialects of the southwest counties indicates that Southern speech has been colored by the English southwest.

The only alternative to this theory is to accept what amounts to a staggering coincidence. The magnitude of the coincidence will be made more vivid by consideration of a few more specific cases. Take the Southern variants of *muskmelon,* for instance. *Melon* is often heard as "million" in the South, especially among Negroes; and *muskmelon* is frequently, even among whites, pronounced "mushmelon." The form "mushmillion," which Harris has Uncle Remus use, and which may still be heard among old people in the South in country districts, would accordingly be considered by most people as about as thoroughly "Negro" as a word could be. The form seems obviously to be a corruption. But one holding such a view will be disconcerted to find in the Oxford Dictionary precisely this form occurring in a passage written by one Jerome Horsey in 1591. . . .

The interpretation of the origin of Southern speech given above raises questions with regard to the origin of the speech used in other parts of the country. If the speech of the Southern states shows forms from seventeenth and eighteenth century standards and from the provincial dialects of England, why do not such forms appear in the states of the North? The answer, of course, is that they do. In James Russell Lowell's *Biglow Papers,* written in the New Eng-

land rustic dialect, occur many spellings which indicate such pronunciations. We find even more parallelisms with Southern forms when we consult early New England records, with their occasional spellings which indicate dialectal pronunciations, or else the remarks on pronunciation made by the early grammarians of this section. To take only a few examples collected by the late George Philip Krapp in his *English Language in America,* "skase" for *scarce* must have occurred frequently in the earlier speech of this country, in the North as well as in the South. It probably derives from the southern part of England, where the *r* was lost early before consonants and at the end of words. *Itch* is pronounced "each" by Uncle Remus, but formerly it was so pronounced in parts of the North. "Drap" for *drop* and "crap" for *crop* are still frequently heard in the South, but such forms were once found in New England also; and in the case of both sections, their ultimate origin was probably in the dialects of the southwest of England.

Most scholars who have worked on the subject believe that the New England coast was predominantly influenced by the south and east counties of England. Pronunciations from the eastern counties, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, are to be found there: for example, the pronunciation of *whole* as something resembling "hull," *stone* resembling "stun," etc. The evidence would seem to indicate, however, in my opinion, considerable influence from the counties of the southwest as well. The influence of the southwest, as has been pointed out, seems dominant in the South, though some forms occurring in Virginia seem to point back to the eastern counties, and other influences may be present in other parts of the South. At any rate, the language of both New England and the South—whatever differences existed between them—in the eighteenth century must have differed very considerably from the British English of today. The marked difference between eastern New England and the South did not exist at this period. These differences came later, and came, not with laziness and corruption in the South, but with innovation in New England through the influence of spelling, the elocution book, and the diligence of the New Eng-

land schoolma'am. Probably no other part of the English-speaking world in any one period has produced so many spelling books and dictionaries as New England produced in the early nineteenth century.

There is also evidence to indicate that New England has consciously imitated British pronunciation by taking over from it later developments of the qualities of certain vowel sounds, and imposing them in whole classes of words like *corn, morning, short, thorn,* etc., which were distinguished in pronunciation from words like *divorce, store, pork, fort,* etc. The first group had an *aw* vowel, the second a long *o*. Today in British pronunciation, both groups have *aw,* but this development did not take place in England until the nineteenth century. Consequently, the appearance of examples of the present-day British pronunciation in New England (or elsewhere in America) suggests a late imitation of British English.

This difference in attitude toward speech in New England on the one hand and the South on the other is an indication of more fundamental cultural differences. The desire to cultivate "correctness" of speech, the reliance on spelling, the diligence of the New England schoolma'am, may, if you choose to do so, be interpreted as marks of the cultural continuity existing between the New England and the Old. They are susceptible, however, of another account not quite so favorable, perhaps; they may be interpreted as symptoms of a feeling of cultural inferiority—of anxiety, that is, as to status. But it might be more graceful to let a New Englander speak in this matter of New England's dependence on the mother land. Henry Adams, writing of the mid-nineteenth century, says: "The tone of Boston society was colonial. The true Bostonian always knelt in self-abasement before the majesty of English standards; far from concealing it as a weakness, he was proud of it as his strength."

The attitude of the South (again speaking in relative terms) was quite different. The South never had quite the reverence for the written word which prevailed in New England. Like England itself, especially among country families and the aristocracy in general, it was content to rest the criterion of speech on a living

oral tradition. Unconsciously at least and by its very lack of extreme self-consciousness, the South ceased to be a colony. Whatever general conclusion one may wish to draw, it would be hard to deny that the attitude toward speech in the South exhibits a culture in a very healthy state. The continuity between class and class and even between race and race was not severed by that artificial and irritating barrier, a *class* pronunciation.

The influence of spelling has, of course, exerted itself on Southern speech, but less than it has on that of most other sections of the country. Otherwise, there has been little or no attempt to keep up with the later developments of British English. Many Southerners, educated persons as well as the uneducated, consistently pronounce *better* as "bedduh," *bottle* as "boddle," etc., thus carrying on regularly in their speech a development largely to be found in the dialects of the English southwest. "Taripin" is the almost universal pronunciation of *terrapin,* for few allow themselves to be browbeaten by the spelling. As a matter of fact, *terrapin* is in origin an Algonquin Indian word, and the earliest form seems to have had an *a* rather than an *e.*

The student of language is supposed to be completely objective —to describe conditions rather than to prescribe standards. But perhaps he may be allowed to affect standards, at least in one regard: by giving a true description when a false description is being made the basis for prescriptions. On one fact, scholars are agreed: that the standard of speech for a country is that of the "best" speakers, the educated speakers, of that country. British English is undoubtedly correct for the modern Englishman. It is not correct, by virtue of that reason at least, for the Virginian or Tennessean. Moreover, in trying to find a standard for modern America, the best authorities are agreed that there is no virtue in trying to impose an artificial and synthetic criterion. If the Virginian is not to be forced into imitation of the Oxford don, there is logically no reason for him to be forced into imitation of Boston—or, for that matter, of Chicago or Hollywood.

If the South—or, for that matter, any other sections of the coun-

try—under the influence of the radio, the talking pictures, or other "cultural" forces, cares to abandon its characteristic speech, the pronunciation then adopted by the educated speakers of the region will, of course, then be the standard. But that adoption need not be made under the delusion that something poor is being abandoned for something "better." Certainly the heritage the South possesses is not one to be ashamed of—neither the seventeenth century standard forms, nor the coloring of Devon, Somerset, and Dorset. The men of the west country were active in the conquest and settlement of America. One of the most prominent of them, Sir Walter Raleigh, was not ashamed of his provincial accent, even at Elizabeth's court. John Aubrey, the gossipy biographer of the seventeenth century, tells us that he heard one of Raleigh's contemporaries say that "notwithstanding his so great mastership in style and his conversation with the learnedest and politest persons, yet he spake broad Devonshire to dying day." It would be odd, indeed, if Raleigh's fellow countrymen, mariners, adventurers, and colonists, not courtiers at all, had not bequeathed forms of their sturdy speech to their descendants in the New World.

SOUTHERN HUMOR

JOHN DONALD WADE

(Professor of English, 1928-1933)

Long ago, at the sanguine age when one hopes at length to know everything, I had it as my business once to write something about a man who was notable as a humorist. My first obligation seemed to me to find out what humor, after all, was—what its sources were, what its charms. Or, more simply, to find out what makes a thing



funny, and why, indeed, we are pleased to have funny things brought to our attention, whether relevantly or not.

I read much, then, on that score, and the result was like most results, not satisfying; I was left for all my effort not much the wiser. Incongruity, contrast, from what I could make out, seemed to be the bed-rock found uniformly by all pundits seeking humor's origin. What bed-rock was found by those seeking its fascination, remains to me to this day unknown, as it apparently did to my masters, in spite of their profound method of saying so. What I had been able

to reckon for myself, I found after irksome suspense to be what other people also had reckoned. What I had not been able to reckon —why humor is delightful—I found after irksome suspense was a question that other people also had found always beyond them.

Naturally, one hazards guesses, and the guesses about the fascination of humor group themselves for the most part either about the conscientious motive of correction or the quite unconscientious one of escape. To jeer at a person or a state of affairs leads the jeerer, with more or less earnest inimicalness on his part, into satire or irony. But some of us fell short, somehow, of acquiring our just endowment of inimicalness, and we have come to cherish the idea that a mordant earnestness on our part about other people's activities is an impulse to be eschewed. People of this stripe laugh, certainly; they cannot go about sighing always. They regard the story's butt not with detestation, but with affection, and they do not cherish hope of remodeling anybody or anything very speedily—not even themselves.

These by all rules are life's ineffectuals; but their justification in humanity is that without them humanity would take on an aspect too horrible to contemplate, too indutiably governed by dullness or malice for anybody to wish its continuance. And if facts are regarded and not rules, it is these people who bring about, for us, all the betterments we ever get.

As for *Southern,* that qualifies Humor in my title, I have put some thought on that for a long time. I learned the word early, and as a child in a Georgia village-school yearned at times to emulate some of my less restrained peers and punch out with a pencil-point the eyes of the northern generals pictured in my text-books. Restrained, I comforted myself by inscribing encomiumistic phrases under the pictures of southern generals. Later I learned better than to wish to occupy myself so barbarously. But I knew by then, and I know still, how to look at a book and without reading it to be aware, somehow, of every word on the pages that remotely looks like *southern.* I conceived it as my duty, once, over many years, to inspect that word every time it occurred on a page and to ascertain

the veracity or falsehood of the sentence containing it. Sometimes the sentence said merely that on the southern slope of these mountains the climate is mild—and that was indeed disappointing. But I was powerfully affected if it declared the southern temperament sluggish, or, on the other hand, if it declared it generous.

I rehearse this autobiography in my anxiety to show that the word *southern* has long had its importance in my consciousness. Has it a meaning, really, other than the geographic one? It has been fashionable to think so for many years, and if the legend which in the beginning ascribed its meaning was at first legend merely, it is not likely by now legend merely, any more. A dog badly named, or well named, for that matter, will justify what is said of him, and a people will doubtless do as much. So in my mind there is a body of notions that hold their hands up and answer present when one says southern; yet to define those notions (since in definition one must be definite) is more than I can do in this essay, or more than anybody could do, I judge, except by implications and overtones and suggestions that nobody in this swift-moving time would trouble to follow, or, indeed, would trouble in the first place to set down.

And now, writing this article, I review in my mind not merely what has been the course of southern humor historically. I wonder what it is, in essence, and whether it is in fact different from any other humor in anything except in its setting and in the types of people it concerns itself with.

The historical phase of my activity need not cost me great effort. The extent of the contribution southern writers have made to the merriment of this nation and of other nations is a matter chiefly of research, and research students here and yonder have unearthed much information about it—with a solemnity that one must pronounce marvelous.

But the essence of southern humor, and the possibility of distinguishing it from other humor (except, as I have said, by perfectly objective tests)—that, truly, is a horse of a different color.

As the earliest of southern humorists, consider William Byrd, that good Briton. Young, he was a debonair blade of a fellow, as

familiar in London as in Virginia; old, when sickness had him, and the inevitable knowledge that he would not come to as much as he had hoped to, he was very tragical. He noted the antics of his contemporaries and wrote about them, not as himself an antic-doer, but as one superior, remote. On one side is his sophistication and his fastidiousness; on the other, their ignorance and blundering. That contrast was accidental; it was not a device of his to make the situation more amusing. His characters seemed to him ludicrous enough, himself not ludicrous at all.

Everything of his that has been published waited, in manuscript form, till Byrd was a hundred years dead. That late, his writings were no longer capable of proving a literary influence; times had changed so greatly, toward libertarianism in politics, toward finical delicacy in social intercourse, that his writings lay neglected for almost a further hundred years. So much for what he wrote. What he said, in its influence upon people who knew him personally, was almost surely more influential—and that disparity between what was written and what said is interesting not of itself only, but as an early instance in southern life of a disparity that marks all life, everywhere, but particularly, I think, marks life in the South.

After Byrd, there are few echoes of southern laughter for a long time. Laughter there was, doubtless, and gayety enough, but the soberness of Revolutionary times together with the eighteenth-century ideal of decorum, and the widespread influence of evangelicalism, kept most of this gayety vocal, forbade it the dignity of being written. When Revolutionary earnestness had burnt itself out in a scene of incandescent triumph, when the old aim of decorum had slumped before the new democracy, when evangelicalism, in its ardor to save everybody, had lowered its bars to admit everybody, then there was a new day. The old heaven and the old earth of Byrd or of Franklin or of Timothy Dwight had passed away, except, perhaps, in the heart of Washington Irving. And Irving, the stranded soul, put out soon for Europe and ever afterward in general stayed there.

The new country was above all else hopeful. Democracy in

politics and arminianism in religion and free land in economics gave it hardihood to set beneath all of its amusement at the grotesque, the assumption that most grotesqueness would soon end. And the same assumption humanized all the jokes because they had in them always the implication that the superiority of the joker was largely accidental, largely a matter of his having shared more fully than his humorous puppets in wholesome opportunities that would soon be open to everyone. The old story tellers are at constant pains to make this clear. I record all this now, they keep saying, because it is so ludicrous, and because soon the very clowns I write about will be behaving as punctiliously as anybody—their children turning out to be—who knows?—perhaps presidents. From a time as early as 1825 onward till 1900 this song was never silent in American life; and it is not silent yet—though it is audible, now that the twentieth century is a third gone, principally in the success magazines and in the sophisticated weeklies published in New York.

The Revolution was well over. Old colonials and fresh immigrants were pushing westward. And then cotton as a great commercial possibility came to tempt them all southward. Georgia for a moment became the West, and it was soon, thanks to cotton, a West that was relatively rich, relatively well ordered—though retaining the violent contrasts in cultural groups (southerner, Yankee, immigrant, Negro) that make for humorous situations. Funny, all of this, people kept saying; record it now, set it down now; it is so transient (else it would be sad); it will be gone soon; it is, indeed, already gone.

So they set it down—Longstreet with his horse swappings and his eye-gougings, Thompson with his tobacco-spitters, R. M. Johnston, and Sidney Lanier and Bill Arp Smith and Joel Chandler Harris—all in Georgia. Hooper and Baldwin wrote of Alabama, Crockett and G. W. Harris of Tennessee, Prentice of Kentucky, Thorpe and Opie Reed and Mark Twain of the South bordering the Mississippi. Even Virginia—that urbane place—offered its quota of natural men to be pictured by the romanticized and romanticizing Dr. Bagby. Even South Carolina—that sedate place—

offered its quota to be pictured by the robustious Simms and the much less robustious (oh, much!) Mrs. Gilman.

And except for Mark Twain, who had the advantage of having been born later as well as innately superior to the rest of them, they all said very much the same thing. Their literary form: mostly Addison-like essays or fanciful letters, with an increasing deviation from Addison as it became the practice to introduce more and more dialect, more and more bad spelling. Their subject: unsophisticated country-folk (mostly white at first but at last mostly Negro) in contact with a world unfamiliarly urban. Their attitude: enjoy with me, reader, you who are cultivated, as I am, the foibles of these men and women, all of whom, as you and I both know, have hearts of gold beneath their superficial crudities.

Over and over this went on, and people everywhere found it delectable. America had at last come free of Europe's shadow; and this humor was really the humor of the nation at large at the time when the frontier was the nation's dominant interest. So far was it from sectional merely that its reception was equally clamorous in Philadelphia and in Peoria and in Vicksburg; and the fact that of the eight southern humorists discussed in *The South in the Building of the Nation* (the eight, I mean, who died before 1900) four were bred and born in the North and one was educated there. The victories this humor won were identical in all sections; the rebuffs it met, ineffectual rebuffs such as the disgust felt for it by females and refined gentlemen, were also identical. It went marching on, and if it had more proponents North than it did South after 1860, so much the more demonstrably was it in the current, in the torrent, indeed, of national development.

For it is worth noting that the Civil War and early post-Civil War proponents of the old humor persisted not in the new America that had taken form along the north Atlantic coast nor freely in the new America that had been driven to take form along the south Atlantic coast. It persisted in the western north, and as soon as the western north lost its distinctiveness the old humor languished there also.

Now certainly as early as the 1830's forces were at work which would render the South unable and unwilling to float its raft on the broad stream of national development. In the light of that time the democratic theories of 1800, and the arminianism so dear then, seemed less and less tenable. Negroes, it seemed, so far as this world went, at least, were outside that picture; and as the poor whites hardened in their resentment against their betters, becoming less amenable, they also were excluded. The southern oligarchy tended to become logically both aristocratic and Calvinistic. That is what it became *logically*. What it became actually is a different story.

There was a condition to be reckoned with that inevitably rides down, at last, most schedules of what one ought to believe in deference to one's own purely selfish interests. This consideration was that in the South, because it was a sparsely settled, farming region, people in the various classes, white and black, knew one another personally, intimately. Most often, as a result—one can risk saying so—they had a sort of affection for one another; but even if they had instead a sort of hatred, no one sinned so pointedly as to mistake people for mechanisms.

In the great North, the case went by contraries. There democracy and free-will had all the official endorsement they could ever need, but the unofficial, dominating conviction of individuals endorsed far different doctrines. As industrialism proceeded men became specialists, and as population grew denser it became necessary for every man to rule out from his consciousness the ups and downs of most of the people he had contact with. It became necessary, in short, for people to act as if they believed other people made out of metal rather than of flesh and blood.

What prophet could have foreseen this—fuddled as prophets must always be by the stir about them? South, all roads led *from* America, it was said; North, all roads turned back on themselves toward the ideals of the 1776 Declaration, or toward some vague place that was perhaps Heaven, and that was in any case very nice indeed. But as plain as those roads were, the travelers on them ar-

rived, at last, curiously—one group in Paterson, New Jersey, let us say; the other, in Macon, Georgia—cities both of which Jefferson might have understood, but only one of which he might possibly have commended.

In the South, the forces likely to break up the old humor were largely theoretical, and any of them that were more than theoretical were broken in upon by the personal intimacies that characterize a rural civilization. Further, any hard and fast program of social stratification that might have dehumanized and standardized society there, crumbled before the spectacle of Reconstruction, with its pulling down of what had been high and its exaltation of what had been low. When Marie Antoinette (for all her saying "let them eat cake, then") is forced at last to beg crusts from her jailer, the situation is so poignantly tragic that the mind cannot last it out; it must save itself by laughter. So one's very poverty in the South in the 1870's—and in more years than those—was often the theme of one's best stories, the nucleus of ten thousand situations calculated to stir merriment.

Reconstruction, then, with its harsh anarchy, made humor mandatory. Desolate and lacking cheer, one was the more bound to simulate it—to shun madness, for simple sanity's sake, *bound.* Reconstruction with its anarchy broadened, also, the *field* of humor. Cousin Lucius, in his patched breeches, rehearsing Horace; Cousin Mintora, in homespun, fanning herself with jeweled ivory—both were figures one could not be wholly solemn about. And the laughter one accorded them, with themselves leading in it, was not far different from the laughter accorded the rough-and-ready catch-as-catch-can citizenry of Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes.* Black Sambo and his lady, the poor white and his, the colonel and his—each with his valid claim upon absurdity. And, to make the gamut complete —put in mind of doing so, perhaps, by the Negro's personification of animals and his humanization of deity—one recognizes as valid (out of neighborliness if nothing else) the claims, out absurdity-way, of beasts on the one hand, of divinity on the other. Uncle Remus' Brer Rabbit and Mr. Roark Bradford's God join hands indis-

criminately with mankind, and the trio will as likely as not, if a fiddle twangs, do some trick steps worth a body's trying to catch on to.

Even fine abstractions, programs for salvation, sacrosanct now in so many places, are not likely to meet in the South with much decorousness of reception. There, there is remembrance still of a fine program that came to nothing, for all that General Lee could do to make it prevalent—it was absurd, perhaps, ever to hope it would prevail—not soon will another program obtain one's whole endorsement. A lofty pronouncement, as a pronouncement, is a marvelous thing meriting one's admiration. As something more than a pronouncement, as a signal for action, it evokes less iron resolution than it does skeptical, half-sorrowful, amusement. Life is volatile—the grave running into the comic, the comic into the grave, each perhaps dependent upon the other for its being. This ponderous listing of grievances, this meticulous study of how to rectify them, this deep drumming to organization and to action—if necessary, to violent action. Are lister, study-er, drummer really quite solemn—more actually solemn than Cousin Lucius with his Horace, than Jesus in Reverend Sambo's praying? (Come, Lenin, and say so if you will—take care when you do lest your beard bob.) *And, besides, Mr. Lenin, I know Cousin Joe—as well as one man can know another,—made his money curiously too, I hear said. But Lord, more than likely he hardly knew what he was up to. And he's mighty kind to all his folks, sir, and I expect that's being kind to half the county—helped me out, personally, more than once. You talk fine, sir, to a fellow down and out like me, but you can see, I judge, how Cousin Joe being in the family, and all, I'd naturally rather look to him for help than to a man outside the family—especially, if you'll excuse me for saying so, to a foreigner.*

Through the last of the eighteen hundreds much of the recorded humor of America ran in the old channels set before the Civil War. In the South, one could observe Bill Arp and Joel Harris, both of them in many ways reminiscent of old Longstreet,—could observe in the West a parallel reminiscence in Mark Twain, as long as Mark

Twain stayed in the West, and as long, incidentally, as there was a West, any longer, in the historic sense, to stay in Mark Twain.

A glib man gifted in grimacing and mimicry, touched with sentimentality, did not need capital to insure profits in the South till a time that only yesterday, it seems, became the past. For long years, there, people relished incalculably the yarns of semi-professional funny-men, some of whom, when they were not delivering their hilarious "lectures" (admittance, say 25 cents), filled in their time acceptably as ministers of this or that evangelical denomination.

They were the court-jesters of a homogeneous culture and they are extinct now not because the culture they represented crumbled utterly, but because it has grown self-conscious and ashamed, wistful to be cosmopolitan. En route, as it were, to extinction, they lived for years in the smoking compartments of railway trains and gabbed there interminably, to their own joy and with cost to nobody. Cosmopolitanism, with its creed of efficiency and its experience of human depravity, warned all travelers at length with printed bulletins to beware of all other travelers, and Prohibition left those who were warned ready to heed the warnings and often half ready to justify them.

But even in 1932, in the effectible privacy and brevity of a newspaper perusal, one can catch (and many are intent to catch) the echoes of that old buffoonery in the comic-strip depiction of one Hambone, true son of Frontier America. Except for Hambone, then, and such-like, the old humor is gone—that is, in its professional aspect. In its non-professional aspect it has waned little to this day.

For consider, now, such a group of people as comes together at countless places in the South to celebrate Christmas by heavy eating. There is grandfather first. The mossy marble has these many years been all anybody has seen of grandmother,—but not all that anybody has heard of her. That lady's sayings, her eccentricities (always whispered about), her preferences in dress and food and flowers, are well understood by her descendants regardless of whether or not they ever had the happiness of seeing her. And there is

grandfather's friend, invited in for dinner, a retired small-merchant he; grandfather, a retired farmer. Between the two, so far as one can discern, there is one point of congeniality: they are both upwards of eighty. How they enjoy each other!

Besides these two are mother and father (he, a lawyer) and uncles and aunts, wed and unwed, farmers, doctors, merchants, a mail-carrier, a teacher, a knitter of knit bed-spreads. And there are countless cousins, male and female, conventional for the most part, some unconventional—but none so unconventional as not to know better than to offend this agglomeration of good nature. One cousin conducts a gallery of modern art in Chicago; one, Sorbonne trained, teaches French at Vassar. One, absent, is represented by a note from him saying how sorry he is; he for his part is in Russia, finding out for some great foundation or other about the doings of the Soviets.

Here are all these people, gorged at last, and called upon by six or eight stray diners, as diverse as they, from another family. These people are constrained to talk about something, for along with the fundamental prohibitions (don't walk pigeon-toed, don't pick your teeth, child, in public) they were all given a fundamental admonition—keep, oh, whatever you do, keep the occasion *moving*. Moving, my dear, lest we think perchance of how weakness comes at last, and pain, to all of us; lest we think too wrackingly of those whom weakness and pain already shove with brutal deliberation to their end; moving, lest a recognition of our own inadequacy—as persons, as a people—sere us here into sighers only.

Would it do, here, for Cousin Julius to talk of Proust's analyses, for Cousin Mary to tell of Epstein, for Uncle Tom to make Bergson clear, for someone else to echo Swift's mordancy, Wilde's glitter? I ask this question unabashedly as rhetorical. It would never, never do.

This is a challenge—tell a story now, you, that mail-carrying Uncle Jack and Proust-teaching Cousin Julius will both think pointed, that knit-bed-spread-knitter Aunt Susan can endure without fainting, that Rabelaisian Uncle Rob can endure without nod-

ding. Scour your memory, sir; let's hear from you; it is your time now, everybody else has said something—what were you born for, anyway? Slash in where you can, echoing that word of Aunt Susie's, giving it an emphasis that she did not mean to give it, making her disclose more than she meant to, covering her with confusion, while the table roars.

"How was it, Dick, that your mother used the field glasses at the beach. . . . Yes, we have most of us heard but Julius hasn't, and besides we want to hear it again." "Now, father," protests Dick's mother, Emma, "now, *father!*" And Dick tells it again, and they all shout again.

"Now that," says John, "reminds me of what old Mr. Pixley said." . . . "And Lord, Lord," says grandfather, "when have I thought of old Mr. Pixley? Why John, that man died before ever your mother and father got married." "None the less," says John, "I shall tell you about old Mr. Pixley. . . ." "Wait," says Henry. "Have you all heard about Res biting Tom Johnson's leg?" (There naturally, everybody knows both characters. Res is short for Resaca de la Palma, a dog-name in the house-hold since the Mexican War; Tom Johnson is an esteemed but emaciated neighbor.)

"Actually bite him?" asks Howard.

"No, just snapped at him."

"I'm glad of that," says Walter, "but what odd taste of Res in the first place!"

"But," George exclaims, "*wasn't* Res an unpractical idealist trying to locate it!"

"Now, boys," says Aunt Mattie, "I have the real truth of it. When Res's tooth struck Tom's breeches, it naturally slid off. . . ."

"How was it, Carrie," asks father, "that old black Bella set you straight about the Family when you first married into it and came here from Boston?"

"What was it, Red, the Yankee said when you bumped into him after coming back from your schooling in England? *I'm sorry,* you said—what was it he replied?"

"Uncle John," says Red, "the Yankee said 'What fer.' "

"What was it, Andrew, that little rapscallion said when he encountered for the first time—and too late at that—quinine with his natural milk?" "Uncle John," says Andrew, "it was like this. The child's name was Micajah, and when he became aware of the quinine he made a wry face and said this: 'Pappy,' says he, 'give me a chaw er baccer, Mammy's been a-eatin' bitter weed.'"

And so it goes, the old Abductor, the old destroyers, torturers, weakeners, frightened for a moment to other spheres.

Now all of the people at this Christmas dinner know one another, and the fact that they know, already, most of the stories they hear told does not make those stories blunt for them. Somehow the story itself is not primarily the thing one laughs at. If that were true a story read or told by a radio entertainer or by a boresome man with a good memory would be as amusing as one heard acceptably. The important part of a story is the effect it has on the teller, and one must naturally know the teller well to perceive what that effect is. That is why a funny thing captured so that it can be drawn forth and exhibited at will by one man as well as by another, loses, often, all its force.

That is why uninitiated northern persons often find themselves impatient at the zest with which southern persons—as sophisticated as themselves, apparently—listen to one Negro story after another, through an entire evening. They do not recognize how largely the point of such stories depends upon outside considerations. When they are aware of those considerations, when they know intimately the garrulous raconteur and his mannerisms, their impatience yields readily. For the initiated understand well enough that the teller, in the telling, is himself the main point of his story. They know that the southerner is in many ways bi-lingual, bi-mental, bi (if I may say so) attituded; he speaks his own language and the dialect, his own thoughts and the Negro's thoughts; he has a sentiment for the Negro that the northerner cannot diagnose except as detestation and at the same time a sentiment for him that the northerner cannot diagnose except as affection. It is the interplay of all these traits that makes the yarn worth listening to.

The humor of the Negro, too (I mean as displayed by Negroes), is dependent upon a sympathetic comprehension. The point is always in what the teller is really, contrasted with what he tells, and contrasted with his relation to the white man whom he placates and with a complete understanding by each of the other, often hoodwinks.

All of this, I think, suggests with some adequacy the present-day, generally unrecorded type of humor current in the South. The South at large represents in its basic economy the persistence of a tradition long superseded elsewhere, and its humor does too. That economy, obsolete in dominant America, stimulated a social tradition that is as yet obsolescent only, and that is indeed not clearly doomed to extinction, ever. It is a tradition which insists that human beings must quite inescapably remain human if they are to remain human, and one may well believe that it will re-assert itself.

Even New York, for example, as late as the nineteen hundreds, found itself as greatly amused by tar-heel O. Henry as pioneer Georgia in its time was amused by Longstreet. And most of O. Henry's merits arise from restatements of the old fundamental theme of American humor, which is in 1932 perhaps less fashionable than it has ever been. I think that it will be fashionable again after a while and that O. Henry would be fashionable again also if it were not for the tawdry newfangledness which he proudly affected and which his contemporaries vulgarly admired.

Newfangledness makes slow headway in the South, and humor there is still at base rural, and all the clanging urbanism of Atlanta or of Birmingham has not been able to make most southerners feel quite at home in the brothel of modish slang—with how great a loss to them let him who will figure. For Atlanta and Birmingham are close, still, to the fields and woods surrounding them, and the bright young people of those cities, let them strive ever so faithfully, are rarely able to pronounce "Sez you," for instance, with a conviction deep enough to keep it from proving nauseous. Most of them luckily have a better wit about them than to try. In the main, when

they undertake to be mirthful, they behave themselves as much as they can like Andrew mimicing his young Micajah; or like Dick teasing his mother Emma.

But a discernible amount of southern humor, such as Mr. Cohen's Slappey saga, has sprung from sections (more social than geographic in boundary) that are in thoroughgoing fashion both urban and industrialized. This, it turns out, has been most frequently indistinguishable from the humor current in, say, Akron, Ohio—a humor sprigs of which have been brought South and set in soil as much like that of Akron as its admirers could possibly search out.

On occasion another type has sprung up, indigenous, I think, though sophisticated beyond a doubt, and by many tests urban. Miss Ellen Glasgow, for instance, is almost wholly dependent in her subject matter upon the sources of humor which I have suggested as being somewhat definitely southern; and it is obvious that all of the assumptions behind her hard, bright wit are authentically local. Cabell and Frances Newman and even Mencken must be reckoned with as belonging to the South. Consider those names, and pair them, not with the names Richmond, Atlanta, Baltimore, but with Detroit, Cleveland, Omaha. The pairing most manifestly will not stand. For these people too are country people, who do not manage to be at home in whirring cities. Cabell's interests are in districts that are surely not crowded; Frances Newman's were in a social plane dominated still by the ideas of Miss Winnie Davis. Mencken's interests are keener in his yokel, apparently, than in most other things—and particularly in that brand of yokel (found seldom in greater verdancy than in the South) whose folly evinces itself most notably in religion. What is more, Mencken attacks his victim with a stampeding directness which David Crockett, could he have heard it, would have mightily exulted in, which is as distant from the knowing, metropolitan Walter Winchell as if New York and Baltimore were seven universes apart. And it must not be forgotten that Cabell and Mencken, at some inconvenience to themselves, doubtless, continue living where they do, and that Frances

Newman, a little while before her death, came very definitely to the notion that her place was South or nowhere.

It is properly terrifying to observe that as time runs, the number of things a man may be merry over is gradually diminished. "The year is dying," the poet said—and, philosophically—"let it die." So I say here: this number is diminishing—let it diminish. But the year passes, the number falls, with results that no degree of willingness on our part to have them change can keep from being in part bad. We can not laugh ever again with a free heart at physical deformity or at madness as people—and very good people, too—did everywhere until very recently. Those sources of laughter are not sources of laughter any longer—they are gone from that list and will not be put back there, and I should be as unwilling as anybody else to see them put back. None the less, we laugh less. Ignorance may go off next; next, the "pain" (so hypersensitive we become) Dick caused his mother about the field glasses.

We progress toward a Heaven, it appears, of unrelieved earnestness and propriety. But there are happily many people who would be unhappy at this prospect, and they are probably the same people who would be most upset at the prospect of their never having the opportunity again to exhibit kindness. Doubly hard, then, is their lot, for they are, unless all signs fail, sentimentalists—and the sentimentalist, like the humorist without a mission, is an ineffectual, and his only shadow of justification in life is that without him life would be so very little preferable to death that few would prize it.

For such reactionary persons, I think the South a good place. Many contrasts are deeply rooted here, and they promise to stay rooted. Not soon will the industrialized piedmont regions *completely* overlord the lowlands, nor the forces of modern education (which may conceivably be bad education) overwhelm *completely* in the mind of either barber or bishop the notion that white people and Negroes are somehow not identical.

More progressive sections than ours may actually reach, *via* standardization, before the world ends, that Heaven of deadly uniformity which I am apprehensive of. But I am sure that such a Heaven

must be very disagreeable, and that no one of cultivated sensibilities would desire it were it not for the gullibility, latent in the best of us, which teaches men to desire anything which calls itself by an agreeable name.

Many of us would find on attaining such a Heaven that the mere name was insufficient. We should want still a tightening of the heart, at times, with pity, or with indignation, a loosening down of the whole structure of our being, at times, with gigantic mirth.

BASIC SONG

GEORGE PULLEN JACKSON

(Chairman, Department of German, 1918-1943)

The view has long been held by some that song was the original form of human expression and that speech followed as a sort of dissolution of the Primal Plan. This view, put forth first by Gottfried Herder, seems strengthened by the essential nature of the voice, "the world's most sublime musical instrument."

Which came first, song or speech, is, however, less important than the recognition of the functional difference between the two modes of utterance in culture; song being essentially for giving vent to the feelings, an esthetic function, and speech being more appropriate to utilitarian ends.

It is also important to recognize that their difference in function is bound up causally with their respective destinies in an increasingly utilitarian culture, notably in our mechanistic-utilitarian western culture. It has been the destiny of song among us to be uniquely neglected, and of speech to be diligently fostered. This difference may be seen, I think, in the fact that song has not until quite recently been deemed worthy of an adequate graphic symbolism, while speech has had such a symbolic system for all our historical times—a system which has developed to represent and to pass-on the records of man's doings and of his intellectual activities.

We can have no argument with destiny. But it will do no harm to recognize that song has sunk to new lows, especially in western man's esteem and use, in comparatively recent times, and to look for causes of its low estate.

Song was once highly respected. Think of its eminence among the ancient Greeks. Think of Charles the Great's concern for music in his reconstruction of empire in the north, and of the prominence of song in the discipline of the early universities. Think of the high-born singers of Roland and of the Nibelungs; and of the

courtly troubadours, trouvères and minnesingers. And bear in mind more especially the folk, the great singing masses, along with the unusually gifted few who stood on their shoulders. Recall those who laid the foundations for a Homer; those religious refugees who intoned their own songs in Roman catacombs and thus paved the way for the sublime canticles of the Church; those who furnished the lyric mythological-historical material for the courtly bards. Think of the folk authors of such engaging ditties as

> Dû bist mîn, ich bin dîn;
> Des solt dû gewiss sîn.

and

> Sumer is icumen in.

From merely these scattered pieces of evidence it would seem clear that song in those times still held its own fairly well in its competition with speech. It would seem clear also that song was culturally healthy, with art forms showing an organic growth out of the more general folk forms. At the end of the middle ages, however, came a series of cultural shocks, at least two of which altered radically these tranquil trends in human utterance. One shock followed the invention of printing.

Everyone knows how Johann Gutenberg's moveable type started a cultural shift which shook the western world. And we have been told that printing and its aftermath have been an unmixed blessing to civilization. I shall not deny its cultural boon or discuss it here further than to assert that it was not an "unmixed" one; for with it and because of it came harmful effects on singers and song and thus on the culture of the western races involved.

Looking from Gutenberg's time on to the present we see larger and larger numbers and proportions of western peoples becoming readers. The more such peoples read the less they sang. Reading took progressively the place which song had held in daily life and in the heart. With less singing, the former standard of happy living was inevitably lowered; for, while the readers became in a worldly sense wiser (we may hope), they could not have enjoyed

in that comparatively "passive activity" the full emotional release which they might have gained from singing. And with the sludging of this important emotional outlet came a slow but merciless moral deterioration. Goethe's remark, "Bad people have no songs," might well be changed to "songless people are bad." Shakespeare, too, said much the same thing.

The professors tell about the "golden age" of popular balladry and how that age came to a close in the sixteenth century, a time, as we know, when printed books began to be opened. This is, I think, a significant confirmation of the view that as reading became a substitute for singing, people suffered more and more from that creeping paralysis of their will to sing and their will to make songs.

The only people not adversely affected by the lowering song life were those relatively few who couldn't sing if they would. Their number was undoubtedly swelled by the change.

The second cultural shock came at about the same time as the printing shock, but it occurred within the framework of music. To the ancient Greeks, as to all Europeans up to a few centuries ago, song was a one-voice affair, a monody, just as was speech. Lingual melodism lived and throve by its own singular beauty. But little by little fingerboard musical instruments appeared. Hands and fingers began experimenting with different sounds made at the same time. The first results, *organum,* were pretty bad, but they stuck and were gradually elaborated. Singers heard these sound combinations and sequences and tried to imitate them. *Musica ficta* came along to keep the piled up melodies from hurting the ear too seriously; then came polyphony. And all this experimentation led straight to harmony as it is known now in western music —almost *alone* in western music.

Harmony seems an unmixed good, just as printing and books seemed an unmixed good. But it, like printing, has greatly damaged song. Let me try to make this observation clear.

Being largely an instrumentally motivated development, harmony has produced (a) its own exactly measured tone system, the tempered scale, which is convenient to instruments and (b) its own

techniques which are appropriate to instruments. Both scale and techniques are inconvenient and improper to the human voice. Singers were forced, if they adopted them, to give up their birthright of a great body of song constructed on a vocal-melodic, not instrumental-harmonic, foundation and on natural human singing abilities and preferences. Singers were forced moreover, if they complied with the new demands, to desert their marvelous old modes (dorian, mixolydian, phrygian, and ionian) and their unique "neutral" and "natural" tones; and they were compelled to master, with "perfect intonation," the new, mechanically exact but artificial scale. They were forced, finally, to seek highest vocal values not in the natural voice range and in melodic procedure but in highest and lowest possible notes and the greatest instrumental virtuosity in ranging between those extremes.

Singers and song makers took over still another instrumental-harmonic trait. They adopted its caste system, in which one voice became dominant among the components of the tonal structure, the other voices being reduced to the status of musical underlings. And even worse, that ruling voice was no longer a male one. The realm of song became a matriarchy. We see singing man forced thus to compete with fiddlers and pipers on their home grounds and under their own rules of the game.

This was and is "art" song. It is intrinsically quite marvelous. So is the daring young man on the flying trapeze. So is the waltzing horse. Art song is an organic part of that music which Sir Thomas Beecham has defined as "a parasitical luxury . . . that must be inflicted on the public."

That segment of the singing folk which did not choose to have tonal art "inflicted" on it parted company with the compliant segment and kept on singing. The songs of these folk retained the old modes, their monody and their melodic lines—as beautiful as the lines of a Greek vase and as far from art song as the Venus de Milo is from a Hollywood oompf girl.

So folk song and art song are still with us. But let's not deceive ourselves; both are minority affairs. Art singers are one in a thou-

sand; and folk singers—those uncontaminated by audiences—are now a still rarer phenomenon; they have to be run down singly and induced to sing.

The *hearers* of folk and art song are not our primary concern here. It might be well, however, to mention their comparative bulk. Listeners to art song have been estimated, on the basis of opera and concert attendants—shanghaied and voluntary—at about one in fifty of our population. And listeners to untampered-with folk song are disappearingly few. If listeners were estimated by radio button-twisters, since these also listen sometimes, the art-listener to folk-listener ratio would probably be reversed. But *all* listeners, the whole cult of listening silence is, I insist, a by-product of song decay rather than a fruit of song health.

While the two minority sorts of song and their advocates are with us today, there is a deep and as yet unbridged gulf between them. Neither group of enthusiasts knows anything of or gives a whoop about the other. I'll take back part of that assertion. The music-club dowager, while she knows nothing of folk song, still does give her gloved version of a whoop when she hears the word "folk song" in a pink-tea speech. And the modern composer, tune-starved as he is, grasps for this and that melody which the folk-tune collectors have brought to his notice. But when he is through with it, there remains of it little more than "thematic material" in his symphony —a butterfly without wings, or with elaborate ersatz wings. The general urban response to the concept "folk music" is like the reaction of the balmy banqueting bankers to an impassioned charity plea: they rose and gave "three cheers for the poor!" And the folk response to the idea "art music" does not go even as far as the three cheers.

But the folk- and the art-singing minorities, mutually exclusive as they are, form together but a small part of the people. The great mass lies outside both their spheres of influence, or between them, and is little affected by either. It is this great mass that sings or, infinitely oftener, merely listens to a third variety of song which has long been in commercial production in Tin Pan Alley, New

York. Its manufacturers call it "popular," and with some truth if one defines popular as that which is widely sweet-saxophoned, sung and sold today, and forgotten tomorrow.

Popular music is of course not *all* bad or ephemeral. Folk songs themselves are as a whole an unconsciously selected anthology of the most appealing popular songs of the ages. Even the Tin Pan Alleyites turn out now and then, by intent or accident, a morsel plucked from the wholesome folk tradition. They used to do this more. Stephen Foster, one of the early denizens of the Alley, has lived chiefly because of his generous use, discreet handling, and modest changing of folk tunes; and this despite his pseudo-negro dialect a la Harlem, or something. Recent adoptions of the spirit of folk song are Walt Disney's tid-bits like "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" and "Heigho Heigho as off to Work We Go." They are of the childhood-melodizing sort, to be sure, but still sound folk material. The prolific "barn dance" and "grand ol' opry" people, too—popular music purveyors all—have come near to the folk. Their tendency, however, to take all too little of the folk's best song and all too much of the lighter stuff and to add to this big doses of stage exaggeration, makes their hillbilly bills of fare a partial, distorted, and therefore untrue reflection of the folk's singing tradition.

If the commercial tune tinkers borrow some little song material from the older tradition, they filch much more from art music. Such purloining is done chiefly by the instrumental music people. They sneak a harmonic *tour de force* here and a happy melodic motif there and apply to them the customary hot sauce. Then their singers are added to the concoction; and the great silent majority buys it from the juke box by the nickel's worth to drown out the clatter of dishes and the din of voices (their own, too) at the Dirty Spoon Cafe.

We have spoken chiefly of the varieties of *secular* song. Vocal usage in religious circles presents a similar picture. All three musics —folk, popular, and art—make up the lyricism in most churches other than Catholic and in about the same relative quantities.

Religious folk song, the lyric life of early Christians which is still heard in some Catholic environs, has long since become vestigial elsewhere. Scraps of folk melodism still echo in some Primitive Baptist groups (white ones and blacks), among the disappearing "anti-hymn" (pro-psalm) Presbyterians, and among some varieties of German-American Dunkers.

At the other end of the music-pendulum-swing, the art end, organist and artist choir are paid to entertain silent pew-sitters with pious products of the masters, thus effectually assuring the sitters' songlessness.

The recent notable development of *a cappella* choruses in some church and educational circles is hailed by some as a healthy sign in song. And so it is. I see it also as a minority rebellion not only against the effective singing discouragements in church custom but also against the usual art song fare itself. It is a noteworthy straw in the wind that modern choruses have gone back for their material into the healthier group-song times of Palestrina.

Between the art and the folk extremes in religious music comes the popular. The great mass of those who attend the hundred varieties of Protestant churches, from the Holy Rollers on, subsist on a song fare cooked up largely during the past two or three generations by the sacredized equivalent of Tin Pan Alley. The earlier songs from this source, exemplified by the "gospel hymns" of Stephen Foster, J. W. Dadmun and Ira Sankey, were innocuous. The more recent and present-day products have become quite shoddy; and uncounted thousands of congregations have become the victims of the slickest peddlers of such wares.

Thus we find the song life of the great masses, in and out of church, chiefly in the hands of the money changers. Neither the great composer nor the bearer of the modest folk tradition has much of anything to do with the situation. Polyhymnia has been made a prostitute.

Is this the destiny of *all* human song? Maybe. But such fate has not yet overtaken all of mankind. Observe the Chinese for example. Song among them is an organic phase of racial culture

and daily life. In their language the nearest approach to an expression of what we call music is the graphic character which means "tone pleasure." Their song has apparently not yet been unseated from its natural position either by the cult of literacy or by harmony with all its paraphernalia of concerted virtuosity. Nor do the Chinese have any equivalent for Tin Pan Alley. Indeed, these orientals would seem to present a picture comparable to that of the west in earlier and earliest times. And most of the other non-western cultures would, I think, show a similar song picture. There is, however, one significant exception. Japanese urbans have long been busy taking over western music—artist recitals, symphony orchestras, and the like.

Are we western peoples (I have been thinking especially of English-speaking peoples as typical of the broader group) contented with this state of song affairs? Is it by implication as good as we deserve? Have we freely and knowingly exchanged the more beautiful, the more widely and lastingly satisfying, the morally healthier in song for that which is in the main ugly, unsatisfying and morally unwholesome? I think we can safely say no to these three related questions. I think the above brief tracings of 2,500 years of song indicate clearly that our plight is not due to our personal desires but rather to slow, intangible, nonpersonal and materialistic developments.

We seem not at all distressed over our plight. We in the west are, to be sure, a small minority of mankind. But we are right, we feel, and the rest of the world is wrong. We are higher, the others lower. This superiority assumption is especially axiomatic among all those who have any opinion in matters of musical art. It has spread even to the popular music field. It gives many an American a feeling of pride to read of the Melanesian entranced by "Pistol-Packin' Mama" when it comes from a radio set. We *must* be superior. That is our firm belief.

But beliefs are changing nowadays. Maybe there is a chance for change in music beliefs. Indeed I think I see such a possibility in the offing.

In speech, the other great area of human expression, an interesting phenomenon is appearing. English speech—so little English and so much a number of other tongues; a language which offers a different set of words to each of a score of castes or imagined castes from the farmer to the diplomat, from the illiterate to the critic of modern literary art—is facing a change, or the chance for a change. At Harvard and in Cambridge, England, certain scholars have "discovered" Basic English. They have found that basic English is English, not Latin and Greek. They tell us that the yeoman and the ambassador, unless the latter feels it needful to lie, can express their thoughts very well with the same set of words, and that a page or two of such words can do the work for which thousands of pages of them have been deemed necessary. The propagandists for Basic English have found that Shakespeare is not disgraced or badly defaced by this lingual simplifying, and that the Bible is already largely basic. But their best sales argument, they seem sure, is that those outside the circle of English speakers can learn it easily.

If speech people in high places are casting about thus for an alternative to a terrifically barnacled language, one wonders why the song people cannot make a similar and equally needful search in their area of expression. I propose that song people in high places do just this thing.

To this proposal I expect to hear thunderous objections; and the chief of these will be: We have no worthy basic folk song. The chastely urban-minded ones will be loudest in this objection. But their opposition must be disregarded on the grounds (a) of their ignorance of folkways and (b) of their prejudice, caused by their long breathing in the oxygen tent of art—the cities' substitute for a natural song atmosphere. Let us listen rather to those who should know.

Call in Cecil Sharp, noted authority on English and American folk song, and let him repeat that the English are "as richly endowed [in the matter of folk music] as any other European nation." And let him tell again of the secular song life he observed in the southern Appalachians, a section which he has declared to be

richer in the habit of song than Britain. Call in Reed Smith and hear him tell that many of the songs unearthed by Sharp and others are sung all over the Union. Call me in. I'll testify as to religious folk song. I'll depose that the pious rural folk of our entire country once uttered their deep religious feelings in this sort of song. I'll show also how this religious folk song still lives in rural parts of the great southern region; and I shall give reasons, good ones, I believe, for its disappearance elsewhere and within the last very few generations—reasons which were and are entirely apart from the *intrinsic* values of the song sort under discussion. And, finally, call in John Powell. Let this noted musician and thinker in art matters repeat a recent declaration: "It would be difficult to overestimate [the] esthetic value" of the folk melodies which he observed in my collection, *Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America.* "In metrical and rhythmic structure, in beauty and eloquence of melodic line, many are unsurpassed by even the best of our [Celtic-English-American] traditional tunes."

Perhaps nothing will come of all the Basic English excitement. Like "simplified spelling" of blessed memory it may disappear with hardly a trace. And it is quite likely that a similar fate would await any similar Basic Song movement. Such a prospect, however, should not dull our vision to the great breadth of the proposed undertaking or to its exceptional and boundless possibilities for good. While the English-American spoken tongue is restricted to only a small part of mankind, our basic tonal tongue has much in common with native musics the world over, even with those of the Orient. It is to a surprising degree a world song-language already and lays thus no heavy burden on those who might wish to borrow from its treasures. But the greatest good of such movement would befall us, ourselves. Conditions resulting from such a movement might well prove a blessing to singing masses now and soon, and a firm foundation for tonal master-builders in times to come.

THE PROFESSION OF LETTERS IN THE SOUTH

ALLEN TATE (B.A.'22)

The profession of letters in France dates, I believe, from the famous manifesto of Du Bellay and the Pléiade in 1549. It is a French habit to assume that France has supported a profession of letters ever since. There is no other country where the author is so much honored as in France, no other people in western culture who understand so well as the French the value of literature to the state. The national respect for letters begins far down in society. In a small town where I was unknown I was able to use a letter-of-credit without identification upon my word that I was a man of letters. The French have no illusions; we are not asked to believe that all French writers are respectable. The generation of Rimbaud and Verlaine was notoriously dissolute. French letters are a profession, as law, medicine, and the army are professions. Good writers starve and lead sordid lives in France as elsewhere; yet the audience for high literature is larger in France than in any other country; and a sufficient number of the best writers find a public large enough to sustain them as a class.

It goes somewhat differently with us. The American public sees the writer as a business man because it cannot see any other kind of man, and respects him according to his income. And, alas, writers themselves respect chiefly and fear only their competitors' sales. A big sale is a "success." How could it be otherwise? Our books are sold on a competitive market; it is a book market, but it is a luxury market; and luxury markets must be fiercely competitive. It is not that the natural depravity of the writer as fallen man betrays him into imitating the tone and standards of his market; actually he cannot find a public at all, even for the most lost of lost causes, the *succes d'estime,* unless he is willing to enter the competitive racket of publishing. This racket, our society being what it is, is a purely economic process, and literary opinion is necessarily manufactured for

its needs. Its prime need is shoddy goods, because it must have a big, quick turnover. The overhead in the system is so high that the author gets only 10 to 15 per cent of the gross. It is the smallest return that any producer gets in our whole economic system. To live even frugally, a novelist, if he does not do odd jobs on the side, must have a sale of about 30,000 copies every two years. Not only the publisher's but his turnover, too, must be quick. He has his own self-sweat shop. One must agree with Mr. Herbert Read, in the February, 1935, London *Mercury,* that authors under modern capitalism are a sweated class.

We have heard for years, we began hearing it as early as Jeffrey's review of the first *Hyperion,* that science is driving poetry to cover. I suppose it is; and we have the weight of Mr. I. A. Richards' arguments to prove it, and Mr. Max Eastman's weight, which is fairly light. Nineteenth-century science produced a race of "problem" critics and novelists. The new "social" point of view has multiplied the race. Literature needs no depth of background or experience to deal with problems; it needs chiefly the statistical survey and the conviction that society lives by formula, if not by bread alone. The nineteenth century began this *genre,* which has become the standard mode. I confess that I cannot decide whether "science" or the mass production of books, or the Spirit that made them both, has given us shoddy in literature. We were given, for example, Bennett and Wells; Millay and Masefield. And I surmise that not pure science but shoddy has driven the poets into exile, where, according to Eastman, they are "talking to themselves."

I shall not multiply instances. The trouble ultimately goes back to the beginnings of finance-capitalism and its creature, machine-production. Under feudalism the artist was a member of an organic society. The writer's loss of professional standing, however, set in before the machine, by which I mean the machine-age, as we know it, appeared. It began with the rise of a mercantile aristocracy in the eighteenth century. The total loss of professionalism in letters may be seen in our age—an age that remembers the extinction of

aristocracy and witnesses the triumph of a more inimical plutocratic society.

If my history is not wholly incorrect, it must follow that our unlimited pioneering, the pretext of the newness of the country, and our low standards of education, do not explain the decline of the professional author. Pioneering became our way of industrial expansion, a method of production not special to us; we are a new country in so far as our industrialism gave to the latent vices of the European mind a new opportunity; and our standards of education get lower with the increasing amount of money spent upon them. For my purposes, then, it is sufficient that we should look at the history of professionalism in letters in terms of the kinds of rule that European society, which includes American society, has had.

The South once had aristocratic rule; the planter class was about one fifth of the population; but the majority followed its lead. And so, by glancing at the South, we shall see in American history an important phase of the decline of the literary profession. There was, perhaps, in and around Boston, for a brief period, a group of professional writers. But not all of them, not even most of them, made their livings by writing. Even if they had, we should still have to explain why they were second-rate, and why the greatest of the Easterners, Hawthorne, Melville, Dickinson, had nothing to do with them or with the rising plutocracy of the East. But it is a sadder story still in the South. We had no Hawthorne, no Melville, no Emily Dickinson. We had William Gilmore Simms. We made it impossible for Poe to live south of the Potomac. Aristocracy drove him out. Plutocracy, in the East, starved him to death. I prefer the procedure of the South; it knew its own mind, knew what kind of society it wanted. The East, bent upon making money, could tolerate, as it still tolerates, any kind of disorder on the fringe of society as long as the disorder does not interfere with money-making. It did not know its own social mind; it was, and still is, plutocracy.

But let us look a little at the backgrounds of Southern literature. I say backgrounds, for the South is an immensely complicated

region. It begins in the Northeast with southern Maryland; it ends with eastern Texas; it includes to the north even a little of Missouri. But that the people in this vast expanse of country have enough in common to bind them in a single culture cannot be denied. They often deny it themselves—writers who want to have something to jabber about, or other writers who want to offset the commercial handicap of being Southern; or newly rich persons in cities that would rather be like Pittsburgh than like New Orleans. It must be confessed that the Southern tradition has left no cultural landmark so conspicuous that the people may be reminded by it constantly of what they are. We lack a tradition in the arts; more to the point, we lack a literary tradition. We lack even a literature. We have just enough literary remains from the old régime to prove to us that, had a great literature risen, it would have been unique in modern times.

The South was settled by the same European strains as originally settled the North. Yet, in spite of war, reconstruction, and industrialism, the South to this day finds its most perfect contrast in the North. In religious and social feeling I should stake everything on the greater resemblance to France. The South clings blindly to forms of European feeling and conduct that were crushed by the French Revolution and that, in England at any rate, are barely memories. How many Englishmen have told us that we still have the eighteenth-century amiability and consideration of manners, supplanted in their country by middle-class reticence and suspicion? And where, outside the South, is there a society that believes even covertly in the Code of Honor? This is not idle talk; we are assured of it by Professor H. C. Brearley, who, I believe, is one of the most detached students of Southern life. Where else in the modern world is the patriarchal family still innocent of the rise and power of other forms of society? Possibly in France; probably in the peasant countries of the Balkans and of Central Europe. Yet the "orientation"—let us concede the word to the University of North Carolina—the rise of new Southern points of view, even now in the towns, is tied still to the image of the family on the

land. Where else does so much of the reality of the ancient land-society endure, along with the infatuated avowal of beliefs that are hostile to it? Where in the world today is there a more supine enthusiasm for being amiable to forces undermining the life that supports the amiability? The anomalous structure of the South is, I think, finally witnessed by its religion. Doctor Poteat of South Carolina deplores a fact which he does not question, that only in the South does one find a convinced supernaturalism: it is nearer to Aquinas than to Calvin, Wesley, or Knox. Nor do we doubt that the conflict between modernism and fundametalism is chiefly the impact of the new middle-class civilization upon the rural society; nor, moreover, should we allow ourselves to forget that philosophers of the State, from Sir Thomas More to John C. Calhoun, were political defenders of the older religious community.

The key to unlock the Southern mind is, fortunately, like Bluebeard's, bloody and perilous; there is not the easy sesamé to the cavern of gaping success. The South has had reverses that permit her people to imagine what they might have been. (And only thus can people discover what they *are*.) Given the one great fact of the expanding plantation system at the dawn of the last century, which voice should the South have listened to? Jefferson, or Marshall, or Calhoun? I mean, which voice had the deepest moral and spiritual implications for the permanence of Southern civilization?

There was not time to listen to any voice very long. The great Southern ideas were strangled in the cradle, either by the South herself (for example, by too much quick cotton money in the Southwest) or by the Union armies. It is plain to modern historians of culture that it takes time. Which view would have given the South a unified sense of its own destiny? Our modern "standard of living" is not a point of view, and it is necessary that a people should gather its experience round some seasoned point of view before it may boast a high culture. It must be able also to illuminate from a fixed position all its experience; it must bring to full realization the high forms, as well as the contradictions and miseries inherent in human society.

The miseries and contradictions bemuse and alarm us now. I hope I shall not be called flint-hearted if I dare to believe that the humanitarian spirit can never remove them. So long as society is committed to a class-system—and it will probably never be committed to a classless system—the hard-hearted will keep on believing that the high forms are as necessary to the whole of society as bread to the major fraction to whom it is now denied. If man does not live by bread alone, he lives thinly upon bread and sentiment; for sentiment and bread will nourish him but little unless they partake of the peculiarly elevating virtues of form. I might even quote Shelley, whom it is becoming fashionable again to quote: "Our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest." I am willing to take the sentence in full literalness, if I may read *form* for *conception,* and *produced* for *eaten.* For the concrete forms of the social and religious life are the assimilating structure of society.

Where, as in the Old South, there were high forms, but no deep realization of the spirit was achieved, we must ask questions. (The right questions: not why the South refused to believe in Progress, or why it did not experiment with "ideas.") Was the structure of society favorable to a great literature? Suppose it to have been favorable: Was there anything wrong with the intellectual life that cannot be blamed upon the social order?

The answer is both yes and no to the first question. It is emphatically yes and no to the second. So our answers are confused. At a glance one would expect the rich leisured class, highly educated as the Southern aristocracy was—for the South of the fifties had proportionately a larger educated minority than Massachusetts —to devote a great part of its vitality to the arts, the high and conscious arts. As for the arts otherwise, even peasant societies achieve the less conscious variety—manners, ritual, charming domestic architecture.

Assuming, as I do not think I am allowed to assume very confidently, that this society was a good soil for the high arts, there was yet a grave fault in the intellectual life. It was hag-ridden with

politics. We like to think that Archimago sent the nightmare down from the North. He did. But it was partly rooted in the kind of rule that the South had, which was aristocratic rule. All aristocracies are obsessed politically. (Witness *Henry IV,* Parts One and Two; *Henry V.*) The best intellectual energy goes into politics and goes of necessity; aristocracy is class-rule; and the class must fight for interest and power. Under the special conditions of the



nineteenth century, the South had less excess of vitality for the disinterested arts of literature than it might have had ordinarily. There are no simple answers to the questions that I have asked. The South was a fairly good place for the arts, as good possibly as any other aristocratic country; only its inherent passion for politics was inflamed by the furious contentions that threatened its life. Every gifted person went into politics, not merely the majority.

The furious contentions themselves provided later answers to the problem of the arts in the South. At the end of the century one of

the popular answers was that of the distinguished William Peterfield Trent, who laid bare all the Southern defects with the black magic talisman, Slavery. The defects could be whisked away, he argued in his life of Simms, with "essential faith in American democracy." The Northern people, at that time, may be forgiven this faith; it was the stuffed shirt of plutocracy and it was making them money; they had a right to believe in it. I cannot decide between credulity and venality as the reason for its being believed in the South. I am certain that in Trent's case it was credulity. If slavery was the cause of war, then slavery explained the political mania of the Old South; and the political mania stunted the arts. Partly true; partly false. Such an answer is more dangerous than an answer wholly false. In this instance it led the people to believe that their sole obstacle to perfection, slavery, had been removed. There was no need to be critical of anything else, least of all the society that had come down and removed the blight: a society that by some syllogistic process unknown to me was accepted as perfect by the new Southern Liberals.

But the abolition of slavery did not make for a distinctively Southern literature. We must seek the cause of our limitations elsewhere. It is worth remarking, for the sake of argument, that chattel slavery is not demonstrably a worse form of slavery than any other upon which an aristocracy may base its power and wealth. That *African* chattel slavery was the worst groundwork conceivable for the growth of a great culture of European pattern is scarcely at this day arguable. Still, as a favorable "cultural situation," it was probably worse than white-chattel, agricultural slavery only in degree. The distance between white master and black slave was unalterably greater than that between white master and white serf after the destruction of feudalism. The peasant *is* the soil. The Negro slave was a barrier between the ruling class and the soil. If we look at aristocracies in Europe, say in eighteenth-century England, we find at least genuine social classes, each carrying on a different level of the common culture. But in the Old South, and under the worse form of slavery that afflicts both races today, genuine social

classes do not exist. The enormous "difference" of the Negro doomed him from the beginning to an economic status purely: he has had much the same thinning influence upon the class above him as the anonymous city proletariat has had upon the cluture of industrial capitalism.

All great cultures have been rooted in peasantries, in free peasantries, I believe, such as the English yeomanry before the fourteenth century: they have been the growth of the soil. What the Southern system might have accomplished we do not know: it would have been, as I have said, something new. Of course, the absence of genuine cultural capitals in the South has been cited as a cause of lassitude in the arts; perhaps it was a cause, as it is today. But it does not wholly explain the vague and feeble literature that was produced. The white man got nothing from the Negro, no profound image of himself in terms of the soil.

I suspect that, in the age of social science, the term image is not clear, and this, I suppose, is due to the disappearance, in such an age, of the deep relation between man and a local habitation. An environment is an abstraction, not a place; Natchez is a place but not an environment. The difference will be clear to those who are morally able to see that it exists. The citizen of Natchez lived in a place but he could not deepen his sense of its life through the long series of gradations represented by his dependents, who stood between him and the earth. He instructed his factor to buy good furniture of the Second Empire, and remained a Colonial. But the Negro, who has long been described as a responsibility, got everything from the white man. The history of French culture, I suppose, has been quite different. The high arts have been grafted upon the peasant stock. We could graft no new life upon the Negro; he was too different, too alien.

Doubtless the confirmed if genteel romanticism of the old Southern imaginative literature (I make exception for the political writers of South Carolina—Hammond, Harper, Calhoun: they are classical and realistic) was in the general stream of romanticism; yet the special qualities that it produced, the unreal union of formless

revery and correct sentiment, the inflated oratory—even in private correspondence you see it witness a feeble hold upon place and time. The roots were not deep enough in the soil. Professor Trent was right; but he was right for the wrong reason. It was not that slavery was corrupt "morally." Societies can bear an amazing amount of corruption and still produce high cultures. Black slavery could not nurture the white man in his own image.

Although the Southern system, in spite of the Negro, was closer to the soil than the mercantile-manufacturing system of the Middle and New England states, its deficiencies in spiritual soil were more serious even than those of the debased feudal society of eighteenth-century rural England. With this society the ante-bellum South had much in common.

The South came from eighteenth-century England, its agricultural half; there were not enough large towns in the South to complete the picture of an England reproduced. The Virginian and the Carolinian, however, imitated the English squire. They held their land, like their British compeer, in absolute, that is to say unfeudal, ownership, as a result of the destruction, first under Henry VIII and then under Cromwell, of the feudal system of land tenure. The landlord might be humane, but he owed no legal obligation to his land (he could wear it out) or to his labor (he could turn it off: called "enclosure" in England, "selling" under Negro slavery). A pure aristocracy, or the benevolent rule of a landed class in the interest of its own wealth and power, had superseded royalty which, in theory at any rate, and often in practice, had tried to balance class interests under protection of the Crown.

It should be borne in mind, against modern egalitarian and Marxian superstition, that royalty and aristocracy are fundamentally opposed systems of rule; that plutocracy, the offspring of democracy, and that Marxism, the child of plutocracy, are essentially of the aristocratic political mode: they all mean class rule. Virginia took the lead in the American Revolution, not to set up democracy, as Jefferson tried to believe, but to increase the power of the tobacco-exporting aristocracy. The planters wished to throw off the yoke

of the British merchant and to get access to the free world market.

But the Southern man of letters cannot permit himself to look upon the old system from a purely social point of view, or from the economic view: to him it must seem better than the system that destroyed it, better, too, than any system with which the modern planners, Marxian or other color, wish to replace the present order. Yet the very merits of the Old South tend to confuse the issue: its comparative stability, its realistic limitation of the acquisitive impulse, its preference for human relations compared to relations economic, tempt the historian to defend the poor literature on the mere basis that he feels that the old society was a better place to live in than the new. It is a great temptation—if you do not read the literature.

There is, I believe, a nice object-lesson to be drawn from the changed relation of the English writer to society in the eighteenth century; it is a lesson that bears directly upon the attitude of the Old South towards the profession of letters. In the seventeenth century, in the year 1634, a young, finical man, then in seclusion at Horton after taking his degrees at Cambridge, and till then unknown, was invited by the Earl of Bridgewater to write a masque for certain revels to be celebrated at Ludlow Castle. The masque was *Comus,* and the revels were in the feudal tradition. The whole celebration was "at home"; it was a part of the community life, the common people were present, and the poet was a spiritual member of the society gathered there. He might not be a gentleman: had Milton become a member of Egerton's "household" he would have been a sort of upper servant. But he would have been a member of the social and spiritual community.

Now examine the affair between Johnson and the Earl of Chesterfield: it is the eighteenth century. It was conducted in the new "aristocratic" style. For the flattery of a dedication the nobleman was loftily willing to give his patronage, a certain amount of money, to an author who had already completed the work, an author who had faced starvation in isolation from society. There is no great publishing system in question here; there were only book-

sellers. But there was already the cash nexus between the writer and the society. The Earl of Chesterfield was a capitalist, not a feudal noble as Egerton to some extent still was: Chesterfield had lost the community; he required of the arts a compliment to the power of his class.

He was the forerunner of the modern plutocrat who thinks that the arts are thriving so long as he can buy Italian paintings, or so long as he creates "foundations" for the arts, or the sales sheets of the publishers show a large volume of "business." But the plutocrat no less than the artist participates in his society through the cash nexus. I hope I do not convince the reader that this wicked fellow has undertaken a deliberate conspiracy against the artist. The artist as man invariably has the same relation to the society of his time as everybody else has: his misfortune and his great value is his superior awareness of that relation. The "message" of modern art at present is that social man is living, without religion, morality, or art, without the high form that reduces all three to an organic whole, in a mere system of money references through which neither artist nor the plutocrat can perform as an entire person.

Is there anything in common between the Earl of Chesterfield and a dour Scots merchant building a fortune and a place in the society of Richmond, Virginia, in the first third of the nineteenth century? I think that they have something in common. It was not John Allan who drove Poe out of Virginia. The foreigner, trying to better himself, always knows the practical instincts of a society more shrewdly than the society knows them. Allan was, for once, the spokesman of Virginia, of the plantation South. There was no place for Poe in the spiritual community of Virginia; there was no class of professional writers that Poe could join in dedicating their works to the aristocracy under the system of the cash nexus. The promising young men were all in politics, bent upon more desperate emergencies. It was obvious, even to John Allan, I suppose, that here was no dabbler who would write pleasant, genteel poems and stories for magazines where other dabbling gentlemen printed their

pleasant, genteel stories and poems. Anybody could have looked at Poe and known that he meant business.

And until the desperate men today who mean business can become an independent class, there will be no profession of letters anywhere in America. It remains only to add to the brief history adumbrated in this essay some comment on the present situation of the desperate men of the South in particular. There are too many ladies and gentlemen, too many Congreves whose coxcombry a visit from Voltaire would do a great deal of good. I trust that I do not argue the case too well. Congreve frivolously gave up the honor of his profession when Voltaire asked to see the great dramatist and got the answer that Mr. Congreve was no scribbler but a man of fashion. They were more explicit about those things in those days. I should barely hope that the Southern writer, or the Northern or Western, for that matter, may decide that his gentility, being a quality over which he has no control, may get along the best it can. For the genteel tradition has never done anything for letters in the South; yet the Southern writers who are too fastidious to become conscious of their profession have not refused to write best-sellers when they could, and to profit by a cash nexus with New York. I would fain believe that matters are otherwise than so: but facts are facts. If there is such a person as a Southern writer, if there could be such a profession as letters in the South, the profession would require the speaking of unpleasant words and the violation of good literary manners.

I wish this were the whole story: only cranks and talents of the quiet, first order maintain themselves against fashion and prosperity. But even these desperate persons must live, and they cannot live in the South without an "independent income." We must respect the source of our income, that is, we ought to; and if we cannot respect it we are likely to fear it. This kind of writer is not luckier than his penniless fellow. (The only man I know who devotes a large income to changing the system that produced it is a New Yorker.) Because there is no city in the South where writers may gather, write, and live, and no Southern publisher to print their

books, the Southern writer, of my generation at least, went to New York. There he was influenced not only by the necessity to live but by theories and movements drifting over from Europe.

It was, possibly, a dangerous situation. Mr. John Crowe Ransom has pointed out its implications:

> If modernism is regarded as nothing but a new technique, what was wrong with the old technique? Principally, perhaps, the fact that it was old; for modernism is apt to assume that tradition is not so much a prop which may be leant upon as a dead burden which must be borne. The substance of modernism is not a technique but an attitude. And a dangerous attitude . . . .

The Southern artists in going modern offer us their impression of a general decay, and that is not a pleasant thing to think about. The Southern writer was perilously near to losing his identity, becoming merely a "modern" writer. He lost the Southern feeling which, in the case of Mr. Young, informs the Southern style: he might retain a Southern subject and write about it as an outsider, with some novelty of technique and in smart, superior detachment. These bad features of the last decade may be deplored, I hope, without asking the Southerner to stay at home and starve. That, it seems to me, is what Mr. Ransom asks the Southern writer to do. It was not an uprooted modern, but the classical Milton who remarked, "Wherever we do well is home": wherever we are allowed best to realize our natures—a realization that, for an artist, presupposes permission to follow his craft—is the proper place to live. The Southern writer should if possible be a Southerner in the South. The sole condition that would make that possible is a profession of letters.

But the arts everywhere spring from a mysterious union of indigenous materials and foreign influences: there is no great art or literature that does not bear the marks of this fusion. So I cannot assume, as Mr. Ransom seems to do, that exposure to the world of modernism (Petrarchism was modernism in the England of 1540) was of itself a demoralizing experience. Isn't it rather that the Southerner before he left home had grown weak in his native alle-

giance? That his political and social history, and his domestic life, had been severely adulterated no less by his fellow Southerners than by the people in the North to whom he fled? Apart from this menace abroad, who cannot bring himself to wish that Miss Glasgow had studied James and Flaubert in her apprenticeship, and spared herself and us her first three or four novels? Could Mr. Young have written his fiction, to say nothing of his plays and criticism, had he read only Cable and Page? And, lastly, what shall we say of Mr. Ransom's own distinguished and very modern poetry?

Is not Mr. Ransom really deploring the absence, as I deplore it, of a professional spirit and professional opportunities in Southern literature? There is no reason why the Southern writer should not address a large public, but if he does he will learn sooner or later that—but for happy accidents—the market, with what the market implies, dictates the style. To create a profession of literature in the South we should require first an independent machinery of publication. I fall into the mechanical terms. A Southern publishing system would not, I imagine, publish Southern books alone; nor should Southern magazines print only Southern authors. The point of the argument leads to no such comforting simplicity. The literary artist is not a successful colonial; he should be able to enjoy the normal belief that he is at the center of the world. One aid to that feeling would be a congenial medium of communication with his public. Let the world in this fashion sit at his feet; let him not have to seek the world.

The exact degree of immediate satisfaction that Southern publication would bring to its authors I cannot predict. It, too, would be the system of the cash nexus; and the Southern publisher would be a capitalist plutocrat not noticeably different from his colleague in the North. Like his Northern friend he would, for a few years at least, sell the Southern article mostly north of the border. Until he could be backed by a powerful Southern press he would need the support of the New York journals for his authors, if he expected

them to be read at home. I suppose the benefits of a Southern system would lie chiefly in this: that the Southern writer would not have to run the New York gauntlet, from which he emerges with a good understanding of what he can and cannot do.

We have exchanged the reasoned indifference of aristocracy for the piratical commercialism of plutocracy. Repudiating the later master, the new profession in the South would have to tell New York, where it had hitherto hawked its wares, that no more wares of the prescribed kind would be produced. For the prescribed ware is the ware that the Southerner also must produce, and it is not heartening to observe that his own Southern public waits for the New York journals to prescribe the kind, before he can get a hearing at home. Can there be a profession of letters in the South? Our best critical writing—and we have critical writing of distinction —can never constitute a Southern criticism so long as it must be trimmed and scattered in Northern magazines, or published in books that will be read as curiously as travel literature, by Northern people alone.

The considerable achievement of Southerners in modern American letters must not beguile us into too much hope for the future. The Southern novelist has left his mark upon the age; but it is of the age. From the peculiarly historical consciousness of the Southern writer has come good work of a special order; but the focus of this consciousness is quite temporary. It has made possible the curious burst of intelligence that we get at a crossing of the ways, not unlike, on an infinitesimal scale, the outburst of poetic genius at the end of the sixteenth century when commercial England had already begun to crush feudal England. The Histories and Tragedies of Shakespeare record the death of the old regime, and *Doctor Faustus* gives up feudal order for world power.

The prevailing economic passion of the age once more tempts, even commands, the Southern writer to go into politics. Our neo-communism is the new form in which the writer from all sections is to be dominated by capitalism, or "economic society." It is the new political mania. And there is no escape from it. The political

mind always finds itself in an emergency. And the emergency, this time real enough, becomes a pretext for ignoring the arts. We live in the sort of age that Abraham Cowley complained of—a good age to write about but a hard age to write in.

THE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF THE CIVIL WAR: EGOCENTRIC SECTIONALISM

FRANK L. OWSLEY

(Professor of History, 1920—)

Before attempting to say what were the causes of the American Civil War, first let me say what were not the causes of this war. Perhaps the most beautiful, the most poetic, the most eloquent statement of what the Civil War was not fought for is Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. That address will live as long as Americans retain their love of free government and personal liberty; and yet in reassessing the causes of the Civil War, the address whose essence was that the war was being fought so "that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth" is irrelevant. Indeed, this masterpiece of eloquence has little if any value as a statement of the basic principles underlying the war.

The Civil War was not a struggle on the part of the South to destroy free government and personal liberty nor on the part of the North to preserve them. Looked at from the present perspective of the world-wide attempt of the totalitarians to erase free governments and nations living under such governments from the face of the earth, the timeworn stereotype that the South was attempting the destruction of free government and the North was fighting to preserve it seems very unrealistic and downright silly. In the light of the present-day death struggle against the most brutal form of despotism ever known, the Civil War, as far as the issue of free government was involved, was a sham battle. Indeed, both northern and southern people in 1861 were alike profoundly attached to the principles of free government. A systematic study of both northern and southern opinion as expressed in their newspapers, speeches, diaries, and private letters, gives irrefutable evidence in support of this assertion. Their ideology was democratic and identical. However, theoretical adherence to the democratic

principles is not sufficient evidence that democratic government exists. I believe that I shall not be challenged in the assertion that the economic structure of a section or a nation is the foundation upon which its political structure must rest. For this reason, therefore, it will be necessary to know what the economic foundations of these sections were. Was the economic structure of the North such as to support a political democracy in fact as well as in form? And was the economic structure of the South such as to permit the existence of free government? By utilizing the county tax books and the unpublished census reports a reasonably accurate and specific picture of wealth structure of the ante-bellum South, and to some extent that of the other sections has been obtained. As has been generally known, the Northwest was agricultural and its population was predominantly composed of small farmers, though a considerable minority were large farmers comparable with the larger southern planters. It seems that in 1860 about 80 per cent of the farmers in the Old Northwest were landowners. A fairly large fraction of the remaining farm population in that area were either squatters upon public lands or were the members of landowning families. Only a small per cent were renters. In those regions farther west the ownership of land was not as widespread because farmers had not yet completed their titles to the lands that they had engrossed. Taken as a whole the people of the Northwest were economically self-sufficient. They could not be subjected to economic coercion and, hence, they were politically free. Their support of free government—as they understood it—was effective.

The northeastern section of the United States had already assumed its modern outlines of a capitalistic-industrial society where the means of production were either owned or controlled by a relatively few. That is to say, New England and the middle states were fast becoming in essence a plutocracy whose political ideology was still strongly democratic; but the application of this democratic ideology was being seriously hampered by the economic dependence of the middle and lower classes upon those who owned the tools of production. The employee unprotected by government or by

strong labor organizations was subject in exercising his political rights to the undue influence of the employer.

To sum up: the economic structure of the Northwest was an adequate foundation for free government; but that of the East, though still supporting democratic ideals, was often too weak to sustain these ideals in actual government.

Turning to the South, which was primarily agricultural, one finds the situation completely contradictory to what has usually been assumed. While the plutocracy of the East owned or controlled the means of production in industry and commerce, the so-called slave oligarchy of the South owned scarcely any of the land outside the Black Belt and only about 25 per cent of the land in the Black Belt. Actually, the basic means of production in the Black Belt and in the South as a whole was well distributed among all classes of the population. The overwhelming majority of southern families in 1860 owned their farms and livestock. About 90 per cent of the slaveholders and 70 per cent of the nonslaveholders owned the land which they farmed. The bulk of slaveholders were small farmers, not oligarchs. While taken together they owned more slaves and more land than the large planters, taken individually the majority of slaveholders owned from one to four slaves and less than three hundred acres of land. The nonslaveholders—70 per cent of whom, as just noted, were landowners—were not far removed economically from the small slaveholders. While the majority of slaveholders possessed from one to three hundred acres of land, 80 per cent of the landed nonslaveholders owned from one to two hundred acres of land and 20 per cent owned from two hundred to a thousand. To repeat: the basic fact disclosed in an analysis of the economic structure of the South, based upon the unpublished census reports and tax books, is that the overwhelming majority of white families in the South, slaveholders and nonslaveholders (unlike the industrial population of the East) owned the means of production. In other words, the average Southerner like the average Westerner possessed economic independence; and the only kind of influence that could be exer-

cised over his political franchise by the slave oligarchy was a strictly persuasive kind. The South, then, like the Northwest, not only held strongly to the democratic ideology; it had a sound economic foundation for a free government.

If the destruction of democratic government by the South and its preservation by the North were not the causes of the Civil War, what then were the causes? The immediate answer to this question is that in 1861 the southern people desired and attempted to establish their independence and that the North took up arms to prevent the South from establishing this independence. This is only another way of saying that by 1861 the South had developed a Southern nationalism. The war for Southern independence was and remains unique: it is the only war ever fought upon the principle of the right of a people to choose their own government, for the purpose of separating from a government founded upon this principle. Looking immediately behind this desire of the South to establish a separate government, and of the North to prevent it, we discover a state of mind in both sections which explains their conduct. This state of mind may be summed up thus: by the spring of 1861 the southern people felt it undesirable and dangerous to continue to live under the same government with the people of the North. So profound was this feeling among the bulk of the southern population that they were prepared to fight a long and devastating war to accomplish a separation. On the other hand, the North was willing to fight a war to retain their reluctant fellow citizens under the same government with themselves.

That state of mind, which manifested itself in a desire of the South to separate from the North, and a desire on the part of the North to conquer and break the South, we may well call war a psychology. Its origin was in the sectional character of the United States. In other words, Southern nationalism and the resultant Civil War had one basic cause: sectionalism. But to conclude that sectionalism was the cause of the Civil War, and at the same time insist—as has usually been done—that the Civil War was the climax of an irrepressible conflict is to seem to accept a pessimistic view of the

future of the United States. For if the ante-bellum conflict was irrepressible and the Civil War unavoidable, we are faced with future irrepressible conflicts, future civil wars, and ultimate disintegration of the nation into its component sections. I say this because I do not see any way by which sectionalism can be erased from the political, economic, racial, and cultural maps of the United States. Our national state was built, not upon the foundations of a homogeneous land and people, but upon geographical sections inhabited severally by provincial, self-conscious, self-righteous, aggressive, and ambitious populations of varying origins and diverse social and economic systems; and the passage of time and the cumulative effects of history have accentuated these sectional patterns. That is to say, the United States has always been and probably will always be more of an empire than a national state.

Before accepting the possibility of future wars and national disintegration as inevitable because of the irrepressible conflict between permanent sections, let me hasten to say that there are two types of sectionalism: there is that egocentric, destructive sectionalism where conflict is always irrepressible; and there is that constructive sectionalism where good will prevails—two types as opposite from one another as good is opposite from evil, as the benign is from the malignant. It was the egocentric, the destructive, malignant type of sectionalism that destroyed the Union in 1861, and that would do so again if it existed over a long period of time.

Before discussing that destructive sectionalism which caused the Civil War, some observations should be made of the constructive type, since, as I have suggested, the very nature of the American state makes one or the other type of sectionalism inevitable. The idea of either good or bad sectionalism as an enduring factor in American national life has received scant consideration by historians as a rule, either because they have desired to justify the conduct of their section on occasion as being the manifestation of nationalism when in truth it was sectionalism writ large; or because they have apparently been unable to reconcile sectionalism with nationalism.

Since sectionalism from the very nature of our country must

remain a permanent and basic factor in our national life, we should look it in the face and discriminate between the good and the bad features. Above all else, we should recognize the fact that sectionalism when properly dealt with, far from being irreconcilable with nationalism, is its strongest support. It is only the malignant, destructive type that conflicts with nationalism or loyalty to the national state or empire. Great Britain once failed to make this distinction and to grasp the fact that the American colonials could be good Americans and good Britishers at the same time, and the result was the loss of the American colonies. After the lesson learned from the American Revolution, the British mind has grasped the fact that good Canadians or good Australians are all the better Britishers because of their provincial or—may I say?—sectional loyalty. Provincialism, dominionism, and, in the case of the United States, sectionalism, far from excluding nationalism, when properly recognized and not constantly frowned upon, and the interests of sections ignored and their ambitions frustrated, are powerful supports of nationalism. Such provincialism or sectionalism becomes a national asset. It is a brake upon political centralization and possible despotism. It has proven and will prove to be, if properly directed, a powerful force in preserving free institutions. It gives color, variety, and vitality to all segments of the national state. Because of this vitality in all its parts, the United States, unlike France, whose lifeblood seems to flow entirely through Paris, would prove a difficult country to subjugate by a foreign enemy, and its government and society more difficult, if not impossible, to overthrow by violent revolution. It is because Great Britain has, as the result of her lesson learned from the American Revolution, fostered a good sectionalism within her empire, that she stood alone in 1940-41 and baffled the orderly mind of the Germans and defied conquest. By loosening the ties that bind the component parts of this straggling union of colonies and dominions, Great Britain has made these bonds all the stronger. She and her commonwealth of nations —her sections—thus live in all their parts. Tragically, the American people failed to learn adequately the very lesson that they so

thoroughly taught Great Britain: that local differences and attachments were natural, desirable, and formed the very rootbed of patriotism; indeed, that such differences, when given decent recognition, greatly strengthened nationalism and the national state. It was this failure to recognize or respect local differences and interests —in other words, the failure to recognize sectionalism as a fundamental fact of American life—that contributed most to the development of that kind of sectionalism which destroyed national unity and divided the nation.



There were three basic manifestations of that egocentric sectionalism which disrupted the Union in 1861. First was the habit of the dominant section—that is, the section which had the larger share in the control of the Federal government—of considering itself the nation, its people the American people, its interests the national interests (in other words, the habit of considering itself the sole possessor of nationalism, when, indeed, it was thinking strictly in terms of one section) and conversely the habit of the dominant section of regarding the minority group as factional, its interests and institutions and way of life as un-American, unworthy of friendly consideration, and even the object of attack.

The second manifestation of this egocentric sectionalism that led to

the Civil War was the perennial attempt of a section to gain or maintain its political ascendency over the Federal government by destroying the sectional balance of power which, both New England and the South maintained, had been established by the three-fifths ratio clause in the Federal constitution.

The third and most dangerous phase of this sectionalism, perhaps the *sine qua non* of the Civil War, was the failure to observe what in international law is termed the comity of nations, and what we may by analogy designate as the comity of sections. That is, the people in one section failed in their language and conduct to respect the dignity and self-respect of the people in the other section. These three manifestations of sectionalism were so closely related that at times they can be segregated only in theory and for the sake of logical discussion. Indeed, as I have suggested, all were manifestations of that egocentric sectionalism that caused a section to regard itself as the nation.

Let me review some familiar facts of American history that illustrate each of these phases of sectionalism. During the first twelve years of the government under the Federal Constitution, the old commercial-financial aristocracy of New England, with the aid of the same classes of people scattered throughout the urban centers of the seaboard, controlled the national government through the instrumentality of the Federalist party. An analysis of the chief measures of the Federalist regime and of the mental processes behind their enactments—as disclosed in speeches and letters and newspaper editorials—reveals the dominant section, New England, with its compact, homogeneous population, its provincial outlook, thinking, talking, and acting as if it were the United States; its way of life, its economic system, and its people the only real Americans; while the remainder of the country, the people, and their interests and ways of life were alien and un-American. Most of the laws enacted during the control of the New England Federalists were considered by the South and much of the middle states as being for the sole benefit of the commercial and banking interests of the East, and as injurious, even ruinous, to the agricultural sections. In order to

give constitutional sanction to these centralizing sectional laws, the Federalist party under the brilliant leadership of Alexander Hamilton evolved the doctrine of implied powers, which seemed to the agricultural sections, by this time under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson, to be pulling the foundations from under constitutional government. This sectional and centralizing policy of the New England-dominated Federalist party culminated in the Alien and Sedition Laws, which were met by the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions. These resolutions may be regarded as a campaign document to be used in ousting the Federalists and New England from power. They were also a threat of the minority section to withdraw from the Union should Federalist New England continue in power, and continue its policy of ignoring the agricultural sections of the country or of running roughshod over their interests.

The overthrow of New England's control of the national government by the Jeffersonian party in 1800 resulted in a twenty-four-year regime of the Virginia dynasty, during fifteen years of which —that is, until after the War of 1812—the government was distinctly dominated by the South and Southwest. If Hamilton had been positive that the welfare of the nation depended upon reinforcing and maintaining by special government favor the capitalistic system of the East, Jefferson was more positive that democratic and constitutional government and the welfare of the American people depended upon maintaining the supremacy in government and society of a landowning farmer-people whose center of gravity was in the South and middle states. To Jefferson, commerce, finance, and industry were only necessary evils to be maintained purely as conveniences and handmaidens of agriculture. Such a doctrinaire conception of government and society boded ill for New England; and the period from 1801 until the end of the War of 1812 was filled with laws, decrees, and executive acts that seemed to threaten the economic and social existence of that section. One measure in particular seemed to be destined to end forever in favor of the South the sectional balance of power, namely, the purchase

of Louisiana. During all this time New England's standing committee on secession, the Essex Junto, was maneuvering to bring about the withdrawal of New England from the Federal Union; nor is there any sufficient reason to suppose that it would not have eventually succeeded in the disruption of the Union had not the ending of the war with Great Britain brought a termination of the policies that seemed so detrimental to the social and economic interests of the East; and had not the outburst of genuine nationalism at the victorious ending of the war actually resulted in the adoption of measures distinctly favorable to New England. The point I wish to emphasize is that the rise to power of the South and middle states was marked by the same egocentric sectionalism which characterized the dominance of Federalist New England: the agricultural sections thought of themselves as the United States, thought of the American farmers as the only simon-pure Americans, and looked upon the interests of the agricultural population as the national interests.

It is not the ambition of this essay to attempt a summary of the ante-bellum history of the United States; but simply to use the twelve-year sectional regime of the Federalists and about the same length of rule by the Jeffersonian party to illustrate that tendency of the dominant section to consider itself the United States and its people the American people, and by the same token to ignore or treat with contempt the peculiar needs of the minority sections.

The second manifestation of that egocentric sectionalism which led to the American Civil War was the attempt of one section to gain a permanent ascendency by destroying the sectional balance of power or by permanently undermining the prestige of the other section. Let me pause for a moment, in discussing the overthrow of the balance of power, and review very briefly just how and why there had been an approximate balance of power established between the slaveholding and nonslaveholding states during the constitutional convention. The delegates to the convention, from both the northern and southern sections of the country, were unanimously in favor of a constitution that would establish a much stronger and

more effective government than that which had so signally broken down under the Articles of Confederation. There was a fundamental difference, however, as to what specific powers should be granted to this new government. New England and the capitalistic segments of the middle states were above all else determined that the new government should be able to control foreign and interstate commerce and to make commercial treaties that could be enforced. The agricultural sections of the country looked with considerable disfavor upon such a grant of powers. The South was so much opposed that it quietly passed out the word that it would never enter a Union where commerce was so thoroughly controlled by the national government unless it were assured a position of approximate political equality in that government. Otherwise, the power over commerce would be used by the North, dominated by the East, for its sole benefit and to the detriment of agriculture and the South.

Finally, the balance of power was worked out by the technique of counting three fifths of the slaves in apportioning representation in Congress and in the electoral college. This was called the three-fifth compromise between the North, which wanted to count all the slaves in apportioning direct taxes and none in apportioning representatives, and the South, which wanted to count all the slaves in making up representation and none in making up taxation. But an examination of the speeches and correspondence of the delegates indicates that it was also, and more important, a means of giving the South approximate equality in the Federal government in return for granting New England's profound desire to have the Federal government control interstate and international commerce.

That the sectional balance of power should be obtained by the process of counting three fifths of the slaves in determining representation was a natural but unfortunate arrangement. It was natural inasmuch as the Southerner regarded his slave as a human being and as part of the population; it was unfortunate in that it quickly identified the political influence of the South with the institution of slavery, and in doing so it went far toward engendering or in-

creasing hostility in New England and finally in the whole North toward both slavery and the South.

As long as New England was able to dominate the Federal government there was no important opposition to the theoretical balance of power obtained by the three-fifths ratio; but when New England lost her status with the collapse of the Federalist party, her leaders immediately seized upon the three-fifth ratio as the explanation. During the period that ended with the Hartford Convention and the treaty of peace the New England leaders were unceasing in their attack upon "slave representation," as they called it. At the Hartford Convention it formed the leading grievance. The convention demanded an unconditional repeal.

During this same time Jefferson purchased the Louisiana territory, not for the purpose of destroying the sectional balance of power, but complacent in the belief that it would do so. We thus behold, during the earlier Jeffersonian period, the spectacle of the agricultural South and the commercial East tampering with the sectional balance of power. Of course, permanent balance of power was impossible in a rapidly expanding country, and both sections must have realized that eventually the forces of nature would tip the balance in favor of one section or the other or in favor of a section not yet born. Such eventualities were regarded as remote and were not permitted to disturb the peace of mind. It was the overthrow of the sectional balance by artificial, political methods which caused uneasiness and wrath, for it indicated intersectional ill will or gross selfishness.

The Missouri controversy, 1819-1820, marked the decline of the agitation by the Northeast to repeal the three-fifths ratio clause as a means of weakening the political power of the South and inaugurated the second and final phase of the struggle of the North to destroy by artificial methods the sectional balance of power. This second phase was to prevent the formation and admission into the Union of any more slave states, which meant, from the political and social point of view, the exclusion of southern states. While the demand for exclusion was based partly upon what we may call

moral reasons, Rufus King and the other northern leaders in this debate were quite frank in asserting that the Missouri debate was a struggle between the slave and free states for political power.

The first two phases of that sectionalism which led to the Civil War, while causing a slow accumulation of sectional grievances, were not marked during the thirty years prior to the Missouri debates by excessive ill will or serious disregard for the comity of sections. Indeed, up until the time of the Missouri debates, despite the rivalry of sections which almost disrupted the Union, there was maintained a certain urbanity and self-restraint on the part of the leaders of the rival sections; for as long as the founding fathers lived and exercised influence over public affairs, there seems to have been a common realization—indeed, a common recollection—that the nation had been founded upon the principle of mutual tolerance of sectional differences and mutual concessions; that the nation had been constructed upon the respect of each section for the institutions, opinions, and ways of life of the other sections. But the years laid the founding fathers low, and their places were taken by a new and impatient generation who had no such understanding of the essence of national unity. The result was that urbanity, self-restraint, and courtesy—the ordinary amenities of civilized intercourse—were cast aside; and in their gracious place were substituted the crude, discourteous, and insulting language and conduct in intersectional relations so familiar in the recent relations between the totalitarian nations and the so-called democracies. It was the Missouri debates in which intersectional comity was first violated; and it was the political leaders of the East, particularly the New Englanders and those of New England origin, who did it when they denounced in unmeasured terms slavery, the slaveholder, and southern society in general. It is noteworthy that the Southern leaders, with the exception of one or two, including John Randolph, ignored this first violent, denunciatory, insulting language of the Northerners during and immediately after the Missouri controversy; ignored them at least in that no reply in kind was made with the possible exception of two or three, including John Randolph, who demanded that the

South withdraw from the Union before it was too late. The private correspondence of the Southerners, however, reveals them as resentful and apprehensive of future bad relations with the North.

Ten years after the Missouri Compromise debates the moral and intellectual leaders of the North, and notably those of New England origin, took up the language of abuse and vilification which the political leaders of that section had first employed in the Missouri debates. Quickly the political leaders resumed the tone of the Missouri controversy: and thus was launched the so-called anti-slavery crusade, but what in fact was a crusade against the southern people. For over three decades this attack upon slavery and the entire structure of southern society grew in volume and in violence. (A discussion of the motives behind this crusade would lead us far afield and into bitterly controversial questions. It does seem clear, however, that political and economic considerations were thoroughly mingled with the moral and religious objection to slavery.) One has to seek in the unrestrained and furious invective of the totalitarians to find a near parallel to the language that the Abolitionists and their political fellow travelers used in denouncing the South and its way of life. Indeed, as far as I have been able to ascertain, neither Dr. Goebbels nor Virginio Gayda nor other Axis propaganda agents ever plumbed the depths of vulgarity and obscenity reached and maintained by George Bourne, Stephen Foster, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, and other Abolitionists of note. Let me cite a few of these—most of them are too indecent to quote. Phillips characterized the South as "one great brothel, where half a million women are flogged to prostitution." Bourne raised Phillips' estimate and insisted that there were a million slave women in the South who constituted "one vast harem where men-stealers may prowl, corrupt and destroy." However, Bourne was not satisfied with implicating the entire white male population of the South in the charge of miscegenation; he gave what he claimed were authentic examples of the same practice among the young white women of the South and insinuated that such practices were common. Foster and Bourne both attacked the morality of the southern

ministry. Bourne said that the pulpits of the South were often filled with "man stealing, girl selling, pimping and slave manufacturing preachers," and that the churches were "synagogues of Satan." It would be far better, he insisted, "to transfer the inmate from the state prison, and the pander from the brothel to the pulpit" than permit a southern minister "to teach us righteousness and purity" in a northern church. Foster, in a book significantly entitled the *Brotherhood of Thieves,* charged that the Methodist Church was "more corrupt than any house of ill fame in New York," arguing that the fifty thousand adult female slaves who were members of that church "were inevitably doomed to lives of prostitution" under the penalty of being scourged to death. Foster, Bourne, Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker—indeed, most of the Abolitionists—put forward such attacks upon southern morality. No one was spared in this charge. All crimes were laid at the door of these people: they were kidnapers, manstealers, pimps, robbers, assassins, freebooters, much more "despicable than the common horse thief." Good taste permits no real analysis of this torrent of coarse abuse; but let it be said again that nothing equal to it has been encountered in the language of insult used between the nations today—even those at war with one another.

This crusade against the South has often been brushed aside as the work of a few unbalanced fanatics. Such is not the case at all. The genuine Abolitionists were few in number in the beginning; but just as radicalism today has touched so many of the intellectuals of the East, so did abolitionism touch the intellectuals of the East and of the North generally. So did it touch the moral and political leaders. The effects upon the minds of those millions who did not consider themselves Abolitionists were profound. In time the average Northerner accepted in whole or in part the abolitionist picture of southern people: they became monsters, and their children became not children but young monsters. Such a state of mind is fertile soil for war. The effect upon the minds of the southern people was far more profound, since they were recipients of this Niagara of insults and threats. To them the northern people were

a combination of mad fanatics and cold-blooded political adventurers. As years passed, slow and consuming fury took hold of the southern people; and this fury was combined with a deadly fear which John Brown's raid confirmed: a fear that most of the northern people not only hated the southern people but would willingly see them exterminated. This fear was further confirmed when such a kindly philosopher as Ralph Waldo Emerson approved of the incendiary John Brown, by likening him to Jesus.

The political, intellectual, and moral leaders of the South did not remain silent under the abuse of the crusaders and the fellow travelers and well-wishers, but replied in a manner that added fuel to the roaring flames which were fast consuming the last vestiges of national unity. The language of insult which the so-called fire-eaters employed, however, was not usually coarse or obscene in comparison with that of the Abolitionists; it was urbane and restrained to a degree—but insulting. Thus in language of abuse and insult was jettisoned the comity of sections: And let me repeat that peace between sections as between nations is placed in jeopardy when one section fails to respect the self-respect of the people of another section.

A RURAL PROFILE

H. Clarence Nixon

(Professor of History and Political Science, 1925-1928;
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Bill, or "Will," Nixon was the community name of William Dawson Nixon, who died at Merrellton, near Possum Trot, on July 8, 1928, at the age of seventy-one. A gentle afternoon rain was falling as his funeral procession left the house, a house which he had built,



and moved down the road between fields of cotton. The cotton fields, his and his tenants', were clean of grass and well advanced in growth. The silent rain made them look their best and seemingly beg for the master's approval as he moved by for the last time. This he would not have had otherwise, for he had always liked to look at good crops of cotton, especially if they were his. One of his keenest joys was to show his "brag" patches to visitors, and all the patches seemed to be "brag" patches today, and there were more

visitors than ever. He had traveled the ladder from non-owner to small farm-owner, to large owner, to the largest landowner in the valley. He had lived hard and in his own view had deserved all his fields, if not more.

William Nixon was born on a Georgia farm, not far from Atlanta, and became acquainted with travel by covered wagon. His family in his boyhood migrated to Arkansas, seeking new opportunities which did not materialize, and ended up by settling in Calhoun County, Alabama. It was a large family owning a small farm. All had to work, and that work did not keep them out of debt.

William attended school at the unincorporated settlements of Weaver Station and White Plains, part of the time living with relatives and working for his board. He roamed the woods to gather up "pineknots" to make his own fires for cool or cold weather, the "pineknots" also furnishing the evening light by which he read and figured. To get the best light on his book, he sometimes lay flat of his back on the floor with his head toward the fire. He studied pretty hard, especially concentrating on arithmetic, "mental arithmetic," and algebra. He went to bed one night with a problem on his mind and dreamed the correct solution, which he hurried to write down the first thing next morning. He added a smattering of Latin to reading, spelling, penmanship, and his mathematics. He got acquainted with the dictionary.

He took the examination at the courthouse for a teacher's license one morning and was informed in the afternoon of the same day that he had passed. He taught four years, and his last school was at Green's School House, partly because his parents were living near by at the rural community of Possum Trot. During his four years of teaching he had ambitions of being a lawyer, and, in order to have money enough for such preparation, he tried to save every possible nickel and to supplement his teaching earnings through all sorts of part-time jobs and any vacation work which he could get. He worked at farming, and he worked at sawmilling. Still, at the end of the four years, he had $250 in cash and a little simple frame house, which he had built with lumber earned by sawmill work.

He gave up law, started out as a merchant, soon married, and was on his way, at the age of twenty-nine.

After a few months in a mercantile partnership with John P. Woolf, at Piedmont, Bill Nixon withdrew, largely because his friend and partner was a drinking man and he was not. He then came to the new Junction and formed a partnership with Butler Green, who knew more about farming and cared more about farming than about the mercantile business. This left the younger man free to become a businessman in his own right. But it was not long before Nixon was in business for himself and married to Butler Green's daughter Nancy.

Bill Nixon was not only a new merchant and a newly married man at the Junction. He was also for some years railroad ticket agent, freight agent, express agent, and postmaster, performing these various functions on a commission or percentage basis and meeting trains at the flag station at all hours of the day and night. He also rented land from Green and became a farmer, even before becoming a landowner. Nancy helped at the store as much as she could when she was needed. A clerk was employed for $12.50 a month with room and board. Under these arrangements Bill Nixon had to keep his own books, frequently being at that task before dawn in the morning, so that he could be free for outdoor work by breakfast time or before. He borrowed money from a loan company at Anniston, paying an interest rate of seventeen per cent per annum, managing to make money with the use of this money. In 1887 he purchased the mortgaged Moreland farm from its absentee owner, George Arnold, of Jacksonville. This farm joined the Green land, part of which he bought. Hence there were more debts to pay, more work to do, and greater hopes to nurse. A sixty-saw cotton gin was added, and soon a gristmill, and I myself came into a mighty busy little rural world, the eldest of eight children.

In a few years a secondhand sawmill was brought to the premises, not primarily to saw lumber for commercial shipment, but to saw up farm logs for farm buildings, repairs, and improvements. Logs were also sawed into lumber for neighbors on a toll basis. I was in

the woods one day when not quite seven years old, following along with the loggers, the chief logger and director being Bill Nixon, my dad, when news came that another Nixon child was about to be born. I was then in the woods temporarily without a father, who hurried astride a mule, leaving me in mystery until I later reached home to find out that I had a baby brother. It was fun to see the men "snake" logs down hillsides, load the logs on the long-wagon, and move the load to the mill with a team of four oxen. At that boyhood age I saw the whole process by which standing pine trees were transformed into boards and sills and scantlings, which in turn were transformed into bridges and houses.

It was mainly from the counters and the desk of a country store that I got insight into the working and plannings and management of Bill Nixon for thirty years. He had me behind the counter, as a Negro workman put it, as soon as I could see over it. Even school did not completely keep me away from this work. There was other work for me when I was not needed at the store, work which consisted of chopping cotton, picking cotton, cutting "sprouts" in "new grounds," pulling garden weeds for hogs, feeding mules, duty at the gin, running errands, and other chores. Sunday did not mean complete exemption from these activities. Thus was I a part of the expanding economic organism that came from the dream and leadership of Bill Nixon, who was something of an economic man in the flesh.

The store, shortly before and after the turn of the century, was the furnishing agency for the Nixon tenants, the Robert McCain tenants, the Y. C. Harris tenants, and at times a few other tenants and independent farmers. The important fertilizer bills also were included, though the landlords had their pro rata share of this charge to pay. Adequate real interest on accounts to be paid in the autumn was secured through a mark-up of "time" prices considerably above cash prices. The accounts were nearly always settled. They were generally kept within the customer's capacity to pay as indicated by the crop prospects, which were constantly observed. Uncle Robert McCain was too conservative, wishing a one-mule cropper to make

a crop on a twenty-five dollar account. The landlord's lien was automatic by law, did not have to be recorded, and was a prior claim over any outside crop mortgage, no matter for what purpose. I early learned those points as well as Babe Ruth ever learned baseball. I also soon learned that it was illegal for a merchant or ginner to receive farm products after dark, though I went through college before discovering that such a regulation came out of Reconstruction days.

Bill Nixon made not a few pine-plank coffins between 1890 and 1910 to accommodate tenant families among whom death occurred under straitened circumstances. He thus avoided the necessity of "standing good" for an undertaker's bill too large for the tenant to pay in the autumn. The coffin was made between death and burial. It was completed in about two hours and was of a box-like shape, except for a geometrical bulge on either side. Black cotton cloth covered it, and white cotton cloth lined it, thanks generally to Nancy Nixon's cutting and sewing. A little pillow made it ready for the corpse, and a minimum of $1.50 was generally added to the store account of the family.

There were occasional tenants who sought to beat their debts or delay and jeopardize their payments. Under attachment proceedings they, too, learned the meaning of landlord liens. One of our customers, not a tenant, in the late nineties, tried to "beat" his account by slipping away to Texas. His crop was gone, but his household goods were attached while being loaded, the legal claim being that the goods were about to be removed from the state in the face of unpaid debts. The customer paid the debt so that he could go to Texas. A tenant's wife once came to the store with fire in her eyes about some charge, which she did not understand, and which her husband, her inferior in personality and avoirdupois, had failed to explain. Bill Nixon's reply was, "You are a woman, and I cannot talk to you, but, if you will go home and put on breeches, I'll slap your jaws." She departed, but with the parting shot, "I can wear the breeches."

The Nixon store was burglarized at night several times in its his-

tory. Neither race had a monopoly on this stealing. Two attempts were stopped, with the would-be rogues scared off or driven off. On two other occasions the thieves were subsequently caught with part of the merchandise in their possession, once by Bill Nixon himself. Accompanied by an elderly constable, he went to the suspect's house, over the mountain fifteen miles away, and chased the fleeing culprit by the moonlight over a field, up a hill, down a hill, and into a wire fence, where he held him by muscular power until the trailing constable could come up to make the arrest official. Most of the merchandise was recovered.

Until the coming of automobile transportation we did a thriving cash business at the store. We had not a few weekly and monthly accounts with men "following public works." These included railway section hands, sawmill workers, wood-choppers, charcoal-burners, hewers of cross-ties, and, at times, workers in ore mines. There were our own wage laborers to sell to. These included gin workers, sawmill workers, field hands, and wood-choppers, who cleared some two hundred acres in the years from 1890 to 1912. For many years before the World War we had a good store business with the Maxwell family, who operated the "government" still a mile away. Their workers also spent money with us. I used to think that the Maxwells were rich, because their money seemed to come and go so easily. They combined farming and ginning with liquor distilling. We sold goods to farm families living on their own small holdings of gray land a few miles west and northwest of the railroads. These families practiced mixed farming, limited their cotton crops, and avoided the credit economy. They paid spot cash or exchanged chickens and eggs for their purchases. We in turn sold chickens and eggs to railroad men.

All our merchandise did not come from jobbers and corporations. We handled meal from our gristmill, meal ground from toll corn. At times we sold corn from our own crib. We often had share-rent sorghum syrup for sale. We sometimes bought axe handles from farmers who made them, paying "in trade" and selling for cash. We handled no vegetables, for every family in the neighborhood

either raised vegetables or did without them. We stocked up with fruit in December, and I still think of Christmas when I smell oranges in the country.

Up to the First World War the Nixon stock of general merchandise included a fair amount of dry goods and notions. We carried hats and shoes, calico, and bleached as well as unbleached "domestic," work shirts and overalls, and many items of hardware. Occasionally, for a good customer, we ordered a suit of clothes, a wagon, or a buggy. We sold a barrel of stick candy every three months and sometimes in less time. "Six cases of Bruton's Snuff" was a frequent shipment for us to receive, though in early days there was "Garrett's Snuff" on the shelves. Our smoking tobacco most consistently for the greatest number of years was "Duke's Mixture." Possom Trot men rolled their own cigarettes prior to the fabulous twenties, and then only a portion of the smoking population went over to the machine-made cigarettes. "Old Virginia Cheroots" were our nearest approach to cigars. In the realm of chewing tobacco brands, memory summons "Speckled Beauty," "Schnapps," "Brown's Mule," and "Sweep Stakes." No little of Bill Nixon's income through the years came from selling tobacco, of which he himself was no consumer.

We handled substantial amounts of flour and "sowbelly" meat. We bought both granulated and brown sugar, sacking it as we sold it. We bought green coffee, and later roasted coffee, by the sack, just edging into ground coffee in recent years when it could be delivered by motor truck. We switched from green coffee to roasted coffee a while after we switched from bulk shot and powder to breech-loading shotgun shells. Thus our customers or their wives for years roasted or parched and ground their coffee at home. Our package goods were restricted chiefly to cooking soda, sardines, salmon, oysters, and patent medicines. One of our stand-bys for some years was "Dr. King's New Discovery," which was "for coughs, colds, and all throat and lung affections." Another was "Dr. M. A. Simmons Liver Medicine," which sometimes came in a "giant package," with songbooks for free distribution. "Tutt's Pills" and "Wine

of Cardui" moved to and from our shelves. We sold an abundance of "Ramon's Relief." We handled paregoric until Federal regulation made that impossible for us. Of course we carried consistently a supply of quinine, calomel, castor oil, turpentine, and epsom salts. And I remember the wicked taste of a remedy called "Vermifuge."

"Competition is the life of trade." That saying was quoted now and then at the store. We had a monopoly of our tenant trade, but had to go out after the other business. We had to compete with the town of Jacksonville, with the town of Piedmont, and, sometimes, with a store or two in between. Also, for twenty-five years there was the Green store just a hundred feet away. Besides seeking to cultivate good will, we sought to make attractive prices by buying as favorably as possible. We alternated between Annison and Rome as buying markets for most of our groceries and hardware. We secured sugar and bulk coffee from New Orleans commission merchants. We bought tobacco and snuff in direct shipments from manufacturers through jobbers. Shoes and dry goods frequently came from Knoxville or Atlanta. We got all the trade and term discounts we possibly could. We got competitive offers on cotton and cottonseed when we were ready to sell. I was taught that business was a fighting game, that only a fighting man could succeed at it; the fighting man should obey rules or principles but should look out for himself and gain the maximum within the rules.

Bill Nixon was a good trader and was worsted only about once in horse-swapping and mule purchases. When the Seaboard railroad came through, taking up and changing the E & W line, its agent offered a maximum of $600 for a new right of way through the Nixon lands. A court case followed. Nixon paid a lawyer fifty dollars, fed him arguments and testimony about pasture damage, creek changes, and perpetual inconveniences, and came out with a settlement for $1,500. After the World War, when the paved road came through, and the surveyors ran the line smack through a Nixon tenant house, there was a special problem, in addition to the land value. In the midst of an impasse on the house damage claim, he proposed to the authorities that they either actually move the

house intact off the right of way or give him $300 to move it. They gave him the job. He used half a dozen men and improvised equipment and had the house moved in a half a day. The one time he ever sold a tract of land was during the iron and steel boom accompanying the formation of the United States Steel Corporation. He sold a tract in the woods, for which he had paid less than two dollars an acre, but which had good traces of iron, and cleared $2,000 profit. He had already cut the best timber off and sawed it up. The mining venture was abandoned after a few months.

He nearly always got the maximum production from hired labor, mainly by staying with his workers and himself setting the working pace, whether with a plow gang, a crowd of cotton-choppers, or the gin workers. Only few could lead him and fewer would. With only common labor for help, he did his own blacksmithing, most of his gin-repairing, and all his tenant-house construction. After a few years he gave up hunting entirely, except for an occasional chase of possums on autumn nights. He went to church occasionally on Sunday and sometimes to revivals at night. He could not spare the the time to attend weekday morning services at revival meetings. He quoted First Timothy, chapter 5, verse 8, "But if any provide not for his own . . . house, he . . . is worse than an infidel." He could not go to church when there was work, money-making work, to do. Whenever warned that he was working too hard, his ever-ready reply was, "It's better to wear out than to rust out."

The W. D. Nixon business expansion took three forms: (1) more machinery and equipment, (2) acquisition of adjacent farm lands, and (3) investments in the city of Anniston. The gin capacity was doubled in about eight years, along with the addition of a planer, shingle mill, and a larger engine and boiler. Ten years later he junked the old gins in favor of a larger and modern outfit, including pneumatic equipment for handling cotton from the wagon and likewise for blowing the seed out of the way. Rail fences had given way to barbed wire. A sorghum mill came into use to add sorghum toll to sorghum rent. A mower supplanted hand scythes for cutting hay. A farm cultivator was tried out and followed by the pur

chase of others. Finally, after the World War, Bill Nixon acquired a couple of tractors and put them to the task of pulling heavy turning plows, larger than had once been drawn across our largest fields by ox teams. Here was a veritable mechanical revolution unfolding under my eyes. Production per man unit had more than doubled, and men no longer worked for fifty cents a day.

In the prosperous years between the President McKinley era and the coming of the World War the Nixon farm holdings expanded five-fold. To the Moreland farm and the purchase from Butler Green was added the adjacent Jim Green farm, which had passed under a debt claim to Peyton Rowan, former member of the Jacksonville furnishing firm of Rowan and Dean. Much of the woods had been turned into charcoal before we got the land, and we cleared in the wake and cultivated the hillsides. Next to be acquired was the Rhine farm, joining us on the north. This was secured from Rowan, who had received it in a debt adjustment. A little later came the purchase of the Dave Wakeley farm, from which the Wakeleys had departed and to which Rowan had a claim. Next came the Northcutt land, the Northcutts having long been away. Uncle Robert McCain died in his nineties, soon followed by Aunt Mary; his heirs, who came from New Mexico, tarried only a few years before selling out to Bill Nixon and returning to that state. The last tracts, lying to the westward, were acquired from the receiver of a limestone company which had abandoned operations and gone into the hands of a receiver. These ran the total to two thousand acres, all in one body, which embraced what at different times had been ten homesteads. The area touched three railroad stations and contained four burial grounds. As comparatively level lands down stream to the westward were acquired, cultivation was abandoned on the hills to the eastward where the second-growth pines got gradually started. The last big clearing job was done, not on hills, but on a swamp, "the ten-acre pond," which was drained and turned into a productive corn field.

Production on the total area was pushed up to more than a hundred bales of cotton, with enough corn and hay to feed the live-

stock, including about thirty mules. Three fourths of the land was not in cultivation. Share tenants, owning their own stock and equipment, generally worked the lands most distant from the Nixon barn. Sharecroppers worked the nearer lands, except some of the best, which was cultivated with wage labor, and some of the poorest land, which was being improved by crops of peas. The number of tenants was around twenty, including one-mule farmers and up to four-mule farmers. Approximately one third of the tenants were Negroes, who were chiefly sharecroppers. In 1911, for example, we had sixteen white families and five colored families on the consolidated homesteads. Moreover, the sixteen white farmers paid their accounts that year, with funds in the clear ranging from $25 to $200. It was a good year for both tenants and landlord, but seemingly "them days is gone forever." We lost $200 on one sharecropper in 1921, with cotton low and merchandise high.

The store by this time was becoming less a general store and more a combination office and plantation commissionary. Opportunities for cash trade declined. No longer was there a "coaling" for producing charcoal. No longer was wood being shipped to Rock Run. Sawmilling in the community declined to the occasional operation of a portable "pecker-wood mill." The limekiln at Tredegar had been abandoned. The Maxwell still had long disappeared. Mechanical improvements and efficiency enabled the Southern Railway to discontinue its section crew near Merrellton and remove the section houses. Such cash customers as were left were finding it more and more convenient to travel by buggy or automobile over good roads to town. Our stock of dry goods, shoes, and notions declined. We were also losing gin customers, except our own tenants, to the larger town ginning establishments, which could cut under our rates. Country people were going to town more than ever, both to borrow money and to spend it.

The Nixon family became a sort of annex to Jacksonville for school and church purposes. The telephone came, also the R.F.D. The post office was discontinued. Automobile travel, bus service, and truck service reduced the importance of the railroad station.

No longer did drummers wait for trains and tell stories. The Nixon store ceased to be a forum of discussion. It was now closed much of the day and not open at all at night. No longer did rainy-day loafers pitch horseshoes at the Junction. Only about one fourth of the white tenants and none of the Negroes were voters. The school for whites was abolished, though intermittent school service for Negroes continued. A school bus was provided to transport white boys and girls to the consolidated Roy Webb School, located four or five miles to the northwestward, where there were fewer tenants and more voters. Old Asbury Methodist Church lingered on a few years after the Nixons withdrew membership and was then disbanded. The meetinghouse burned a few years later. A large Holy-roller center arose three miles away.

Bill Nixon could no longer conveniently expand his business with profit at the Junction and Possum Trot, though he continued to make the most of farming. Before the beginning of the century he had begun to look cityward. He had purchased a residence in Anniston, and, after getting it paid for, he went in debt to buy a store building in the "hundred-per-cent" block. He got in on the ground floor of an undertaking to establish a small cotton yarn mill, the Anniston Yarn Mill, taking a few shares of original stock and becoming a director. He rather consistently voted for maximum dividends, and since that view prevailed, dividends amounted to a grand total over the years of $375 in cash per hundred-dollar share, with a final liquidation of the antiquated plant at thirty cents on the dollar. The cotton factory was worn out, but for immediate gains in the process. A city bank stock purchase, with a directorship, and additional city real estate acquisitions combined to make Bill Nixon and his family less and less a part of the Possum Trot community. The urban business slant was emphasized in the 1920's by the personal construction of a new building in the business section of Anniston.

The Nixons were still in Possum Trot, but not of it. There was one exception. That exception was the wife and mother. Nancy Nixon did not attend directors meetings and did not interview real

estate agents and did not take part in urban society. She continued to be preoccupied with children and grandchildren, with chickens and eggs and milch cows, with gardening and cooking, with rural gossip and helping the sick. She alone of the Nixon household of ten remained entirely rural. Of her alone could one make the three-fold observation that she was born in that rural part of the world, lived there her entire life, and there ended her days. A chapter in rural economy was completed with the passing of Bill Nixon. The passing of Nancy Nixon in 1936 ended a chapter in the way of life of Possum Trot.



SAWNEY WEBB: TENNESSEE'S SCHOOLMASTER

EDD WINFIELD PARKS (M.A.'29, Ph.D.'33)

When a fifth son was born to Alexander Smith and Cornelia Adeline Stanford Webb, on November 11, 1842, the parents were yet undecided as to a suitable name. The father and close male relatives had previously been honored, after the family custom in the South; the name of the boy's maternal grandfather, Richard Stanford, congressman from North Carolina (1797-1816), had been bestowed on an older brother. Some name must be had, and the child was called *Sawney;* probably as a compliment to his father, for Sawney is a Scottish diminutive of Alexander, a name already given to the fourth son. Duly, a few weeks later, the baby was christened William Robert, as a matter of record; in fact, he was Sawney, and through the changing years he remained Sawney Webb.

When he began to teach, immediately after the Civil War, he became Old Sawney, and the name in turn became a legend. By the inflection of *Old,* schoolboys indicated whether the term was used in affection or in irritation. By 1900 his appearance justified the prefix, but by that time man and legend, in the public mind, had become one. Eventually they were one, for legend only spread through the country the lengthened shadow of a personality. And that person did not merely represent an institution; he was the institution. With high appropriateness, Webb School had become known far and wide as "Old Sawney's."

The distinction was deserved. Graying men looked back with nostalgic pride to Old Sawney's as to something set apart, which incorporated within itself the old-fashioned virtues, tangible and intangible, that a hurried world was rapidly discarding. That in itself was enough. But discerning men knew also that Sawney Webb had helped greatly to renovate the system of education in the old Southwest, and that his work continued to have vitality and influence after he was dead. The man and the legend survive, along

with the work that he did, and it may not be out of place in this era to recall the ideas and ideals of a man whose work refuses to crumble under the grinding pressure of changing customs and fickle generations.

II

Sawney's early life was simple and pleasant—the first three years on a farm near Mount Tirzah in Person County, and after 1845 in the small town of Oaks, North Carolina, with congenial brothers and sisters for playmates and the wide freedom of a farm for playground. When Sawney was seven years old, his father died. As a youth, he realized only that some vital part was missing from life, and from this sense of loss came a later resolve that he would at all times be a father to the boys under him. By the time of his father's death he was in school, under a sixteen-year-old sister who taught the equivalent of eight modern grades. The schoolhouse was a log cabin, with backless puncheon benches; the boys split wood for the stove, made the fires, and brought water to drink from a spring nearby; the girls swept the floors. But the teacher, in young Sawney's opinion, was perfect: "When she saw her pupils were tired, she could tell a beautiful story, or read a beautiful poem, and I never saw a little boy leave her school that did not have a love of good poetry and good English . . . though Uncle Remus had not been published, we knew all about Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby."

It was ideal for a young boy, though perhaps better in reminiscence than in actuality. But the scope of teacher and of school was definitely limited, and his mother felt that a growing boy needed the supervision and the training that only men could give.

In 1856, when he was fourteen years old, Sawney entered the Bingham School in his home town of Oaks. It was an excellent preparatory school and, for that day, expensive. Mr. Bingham would accept no paper money, though in his neighborhood wildcat banking flourished; on the first day he required seventy-five dollars in gold as payment of tuition for five months. Bingham's

was old, even then, as American schools go. Robert Bingham had graduated from the University of North Carolina that year and had returned to aid his father with the school. Robert was young, strict, and scholarly, yet with a dynamic energy and a readiness to engage in boyish games that made him the idol of the students. He was admired by town people, and particularly by young girls; in that day the teacher who had his own academy was considered a successful and admirable person, and one to be both imitated and envied.

Perhaps young Sawney was even more impressed with bearded old W. J. Bingham. That gentleman taught Latin, and Sawney told his own "boys" later that "I have been there months at a time and not heard a single boy miss declining a word. I was a little kid, one of the smallest in the class, and I would watch the old man sitting back and smiling like he was eating peaches or Georgia watermelons. I never heard him stand and lecture boys. His theory was that the boy knew. When a boy ever missed declining a word, he thrashed him. He warmed him up, I tell you! He wasn't mad. He thrashed a boy, all the time looking nice and sweet like he was doing the nicest job he ever did in his life. . . .That's the only school I ever saw when thirty or forty boys, in a log cabin, knew their lessons every day—never missed."

For four years Sawney studied Greek, Latin, mathematics, and English. No other courses were given; no others, men felt, were needed.

In the fall of 1860, Webb entered the University of North Carolina. He liked the school and the scholarly atmosphere of Chapel Hill, and he liked even more his Professor of Mathematics, Dr. Charles Phillips. The University seemed large, with 376 students, and it had a new dormitory for men, though most of its buildings, even then, were "hallowed with age." President Swain was economical: each student had to provide candles for his room and wood for his fire. Usually the students would take turns in this, but once two students could not agree as to whose turn came next. Somehow the word "liar" passed between them. A duel followed. One boy

was killed. Sawney Webb had no direct connection with the affair of honor, then, as a custom, almost passé in the South; but it made a lasting impression. He would tell this story with approval on rare occasions to drive home points to his own students; more frequently he would refer to that "field of dishonor" when he talked of the sanctity of human life.

But the University, like the South, was troubled and unquiet. Men talked more often of the results of Lincoln's election than of Latin, religion, or love. Classwork went forward uncertainly; the present seemed too all-engrossing for either future or past to matter very much. Sawney tried to keep his mind free of these troublous doubts. His own people, and he with them, believed in the Union.

When the holidays were past, he found that a few students from Georgia and South Carolina had not returned. Rapidly the states seceded, until on February 4 a congress of delegates met at Montgomery, Alabama, and elected Jefferson Davis president of the newly organized Confederate States of America. The students, the entire South, were on fire with excitement. Each night, it seemed, he must say tense farewells with some new-found friend or acquaintance, departing to join his state's military forces. Yet he continued to hope; years later, he wrote of his thoughts in the spring of 1861: "I didn't believe it was justifiable. For my life, I can't see that, if Mr. Lincoln had met Mr. Davis as Davis requested and gone over their troubles with commissioners from both sides, they couldn't have come to a peaceful settlement. . . . I never had been a secessionist. I had read about them. All my neighbors and kinfolks were for the Union. But Mr. Lincoln said: 'I want 75,000 troops' in response to Mr. Davis's request for peace. 'Here, you—Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia—must furnish your part of the troops to subdue the South.' We were the South. All my college mates were hurried out to battle, and there was something wrong when the college boys met on the fields of Nashville and Chattanooga."

Sawney Webb hurried out, in company with his mates. A few days before Sumter was fired upon, late in April, he too said brief good-byes and departed to join the "Alamance Boys" in Company

H of the 15th North Carolina Volunteers. Before the company departed for Virginia, Mr. Thomas Ruffin gave a barbecue—and made a vigorous speech. Sawney enjoyed most of the occasion, but of one feature he disapproved completely: liquor was consumed freely, to an extent that some of his friends must be carried or helped back to the camp. A few days later, when he was elected supply sergeant of the company, he remembered that dinner. It had crystallized in his mind an earlier conviction, that any alcoholic drink was, in its very nature, evil. Almost his first act was to refuse to supply liquor with meals. His comrades protested, but Sawney was adamant. Finally the officers effected a compromise by appointing another man to distribute liquors.

The Alamance Boys had expected to fight; they found instead that their chief occupation, for twelve long months, was to dig. Sawney once told his students, humorously, that he had wielded pick and spade all over Northern Virginia. Soon enough the time for fighting came. For seven days the battle continued. On the final day, at Malvern Hill, on July 1, 1862, the company was pushed into the front line. In the earlier battles they had suffered comparatively little, but Malvern Hill took a deadly toll: by nightfall, 70 per cent of the company had been killed or wounded. Sawney Webb had been shot three times, and one wound by a minnie-ball through the shoulder continued to trouble him intermittently all his life. Although he lacked four months of being twenty years of age, he was elected next day first lieutenant of his company. But he could not hold the office. For brief intervals he would return to active campaigning, that summer and fall, but his wounds refused to heal satisfactorily. He returned home to recuperate and to help with the lighter tasks of farming.

In the fall of 1863 he reentered the University of North Carolina. Only sixty-three students remained, and of these almost half had seen service and were temporarily unfit for campaigning. Eleven men, nine too old to fight and two who had returned with ruined constitutions, made up the faculty. But the school had steadily refused to close. And at Chapel Hill there was Dr. Charles Phillips,

"a university in himself"; and there was also a military unit that Lieutenant Webb could assist in military drill and tactics. For a few months he returned to his study of Latin and Greek and mathematics; one dreary night he took down and read Cicero's essay "On Friendship." Almost it seemed too much that men should be in preparation for battle, when such noble sentences *proved* the essential kinship of men. But reflection could aid him or any man very little at that time; the "weather-vane" in his shoulder, which throbbed heavily in damp weather, was constant reminder that he had spilled his blood on a hard-fought battlefield.

Soon, he knew, he must risk that chance again. Early in 1864 the South prepared for a last desperate thrust which *must* gain independence, and every man was needed. Even the "seed crop," as Jefferson Davis called the young men, must be thrown to the wind. Sawney could no longer march and dig and fight with the infantry, but at least he could fight, . . . and he rejoined the army in Virginia as adjutant of Company K, 2d North Carolina Cavalry. As one of Jeb Stuart's men, he took part in almost every notable battle during the Virgina and Petersburg campaigns, as well as countless cavalry skirmishes, and at Namozine Church he commanded the right wing of his regiment. It was his last fight. Three days before Appomattox, Sawney Webb was captured. When General Lee surrendered, he was en route to prison in New York.

Temporarily these last prisoners were placed at Battery Park. One day Sawney and a companion waded out into the ocean, and to the dismay of the sentinel suddenly dived around the end of the parapet which projected into the water. They escaped safely, then separated. All day young Webb wandered around the city. When curious men or soldiers asked what he was doing in New York City, he would reply calmly that he was an escaped Confederate prisoner from the Battery. No man could believe such a tale; he was derisively laughed at and unmolested.

Sightseeing palled on him. Peace, he knew, was near at hand, and he would be put in irons if captured, and perhaps imprisoned permanently. He decided to return to the Battery. At the entrance

were several fruit stands, and behind one of these the sentry must march. As he passed this point Sawney stepped over the line; when the sentry returned, the uniformed Confederate asked permission to buy some fruit. Indignantly the sentry pushed him back, with a profane command to get to his quarters, since the hour of freedom was past. The escaped prisoner returned voluntarily to his bunk and his absence was unnoticed.

A few days later all the Confederates were offered their freedom if they would take the oath of allegiance. When Sawney refused, with most of his fellows, he was removed to Hart's Island; but after the surrender of General Kirby-Smith, in July of 1865, he was released. Sick in body and in spirit, he returned to his mother's home at Oaks, North Carolina.

The section to which he returned was sorely stricken. Four years of war, of enemy occupation, and of inflationary prices had ruined almost every family. Once Sawney had planned to be a lawyer; but now four years of his life had gone, and his younger brother John was ready for college. He felt old. A veteran of twenty-three must look after his younger brothers and sisters. Yet there was pitifully little that he could do. He could farm a little; but his neighbors were all doing that, since they possessed no money to spend on food. His old teacher, now Colonel Robert Bingham, could provide a small amount of teaching for him to do; but the Binghams were themselves all teachers, and the school, though it had many prospective students, made little money.

Dr. Charles Phillips remembered the boy who had studied at irregular intervals under him, between campaigns, and who had once seemed so promising. In the summer of 1866 he helped Sawney to secure a position as teacher in the Horner School at Oxford, North Carolina; and he insisted that the young man complete his college work. Chiefly through Phillips' insistence, the University of North Carolina had made arrangements for its students, who had served as Confederate soldiers and who could not possibly return to do the necessary residence work, to complete the course by a liberal system of correspondence work and special examinations.

In 1867 Webb received the degree of Bachelor of Arts; in the following year that of Master of Arts, although he was never after the war officially a student in residence at the University.

Later, he said that had been "shot into the schoolroom." It was his niche in life. For four years he taught mathematics and Latin and Greek, to find amazingly that he enjoyed teaching and enjoyed working with boys. Already his character was fully developed. Horner's school was Episcopal and gave dances and card parties. As a strict Methodist, Webb did not believe in, or at least did not indulge in, such worldly amusements. As teacher, however, it was proper and right for him to be present. He attended all these entertainments without participating in them, yet without making the boys feel that he was priggish, or the local Methodist minister feel that he was less devout.

But teaching in another man's school was not entirely satisfactory. And local conditions were even less pleasing. He resigned in 1870 and set out for Tennessee, which under Governor Senter was the quietest and least troubled of the Southern States. "My reason for leaving North Carolina was the unsatisfactory political condition of the State. The carpetbaggers and native thieves, with the help of the Negroes, dominated and controlled the entire State of North Carolina. I had had four years of war and five years of reconstruction taken right out of the heart of my young life." He had figured out that the one thing for which Southern people would always spend money was education, and he was more than reconciled to life in the schoolroom.

It seemed at first that Tennessee had no need for him. Teachers of a sort were plentiful and the cities and larger towns were invariably well supplied, in most cases with genteel but impoverished ladies, with ex-soldiers broken in body and glad of any chance to make a respectable living.

Finally he located a school in the village of Culleoka, in Middle Tennessee, where the trustees, though fearful of his youthful appearance, were willing to give him a trial, after he had successfully passed an impromtu examination in mathematics. He could es-

tablish a private institution, Webb School, and they would support him with local students.

Webb had definite ideas of the type of school that he wanted: one that would prepare boys for college. When he announced this plan to his patrons, one man laughed derisively and remarked that "we expect to raise here only cornfield hands." It was an ambitious project, far more ambitious than it appears today. For education in the South was in chaos. In slave days the sons of rich men were privately tutored or went to schools on the seaboard, or in the East, and not rarely, in England. A few universities had been established west of the mountains; and some of these, like the University of Nashville, had attained a respectable size and had done good work. In general, these universities had succumbed during the war, and in most instances they had not been reopened by 1870. When Webb began, he could find "no institution of higher learning west of the mountains. Every college, co-called, took all ages from ten-year kids up. There were no public schools in the State to speak of; there were private schools, but as far as I could find out, there wasn't a single, solitary school that confined itself strictly to preparatory training, when I undertook the idea then. The schools that were in existence published a curriculum that would make the modern college curriculum look like thirty cents, for they had everything that anybody wanted, including navigation, . . . but they had just a small faculty. On one occasion at a teacher's institute I talked in favor of a school strictly preparatory for college, and one old gentleman said he was very much interested in it, and would be glad to receive some of my students in his college. I said, 'My friend, where is your college?' 'Beech Grove.' 'How many members are there in your faculty?' And he answered me, 'Well, uh—one.' He had a college and he was the only member of its faculty."

Webb's beginning was modest enough. His schoolroom was the basement of a church, damp and gloomy, with green moss growing on the dirt walls, so that after a rain "we swept it with a spade." The building had no sanitary conveniences; and it remained persistently cold, in spite of roaring fires. The library contained ex-

actly fifty dollars worth of books, purchased by Webb. His students were as poorly equipped intellectually as his buildings were physically. The students were at first insubordinate and had to be quelled by corporal force; they were accustomed to reading the Latin without regard to the quantity of the vowels, and the teacher the year before had read the translation back to them.

It was slow, discouraging work, but the young teacher met, in addition, the disapproval of the parents. In opening the school, he announced that students could go in and out as they pleased, when not reciting, and might study out-of-doors if they preferred, so long as they kept up in their work and did not create too much confusion within the room. Soon the patrons met and demanded a stricter discipline, but Webb refused and offered to resign, saying that "before I would imprison innocent children, I would quit the profession of teaching; I would rather make my living plowing on a steep, rocky hillside with a blind mule." His resignation was not accepted, and he continued through the years his outdoor type of education.

Somehow the school progressed and secured additional pupils, largely through the efforts of Sawney's good Methodist friend, Bishop Payne.

The year 1873 was a big one for him. That April he married Emma Clary, once his younger sister's roommate at college. That year also his brother John, "the greatest scholar I have ever seen," Sawney often said, joined him in the school. Now he was more content with life. Few people anywhere, he had come to believe, think as teachers think; they were interested in the tangible matters of life, in the price of bullocks and lands and crops, in the weather, and in local personalities. Such conversation was pleasant enough in its way, but it was not sufficient, and he had spent many lonely days in Culleoka, until he was driven for recreation to working the most difficult problems in mathematical journals. By such work he could occasionally be of impressive aid to his less tutored neighbors, and could gain a reputation for scholarship; but he could not be satisfied as a person. Now all that was changed. He felt himself a man of

position and of family and he had a trusted brother to help him with his school.

But his school that fall threatened to disintegrate—1873 was a cholera year. Panic had seized the South until men would scarcely venture out-of-doors. In Nashville that fall Sawney and his young wife walked ten blocks without seeing a human being on the street; in Culleoka, with a population of two hundred, he saw eighteen people die within a month. He helped to nurse the sick and somehow he escaped the disease, but his school was postponed of necessity until January. Then his boarders returned in greater numbers than ever before, and the two brothers returned to work. The character of his school had changed; it was predominantly a boarding school, with only a sprinkling of local boys.

He had outgrown the church basement. A new schoolhouse costing about $1,500 was built on six acres of ground. To build, it was necessary to borrow money at 10 per cent. This led to one of the most dramatic incidents in his career: one day he owed a thousand dollars, and he had no money. "I was out in the garden hoeing beans when a Chinaman whom I was educating to be a missionary to his own people came in great excitement and said there was an Indian chief and a tribe of Indians at my gate. Chief McCurtin of the Choctaws was there with twenty-three boys. I feared the social effects of having such a large percentage of my students Indians, and so I made arrangements with Mr. McCurtin to take eight—enough to fill one boarding-house. He paid me $250 in greenbacks for each Indian, making two thousand dollars, the largest sum of money I had ever received at one time. So after dinner I called for my thousand-dollar note and handed over the greenbacks as if it were a matter of no moment." Often when he wanted to point the moral of courtesy to his students, he would tell this tale, and explain that McCurtin brought the boys to him because once in Louisville Sawney had gone out of his way to take a stranger to his destination.

It was his last financial hurdle. The years flowed peacefully by, bringing always more students, and bringing to Sawney personally,

in the course of time, eight children. There was only one matter to vex him, but that tried him sorely: liquor. He had fought it in the army, but to no avail; now it threatened to undo all that he could do in the schoolroom. Merchants *would* sell beer and whiskey to his students, try as he might to prevent it; and at last his patience gave way. He precipitated a local fight on the question, but lost; and that year of 1886 he moved his school to the little town of Bell Buckle, where local option prevailed.

He had only to move in the physical sense. For Webb School had become, even then, a *traditional* institution; and its students followed Old Sawney.

And he was no longer penniless. He had $12,000, enough to put up a fine building or two; certainly enough, in the Tennessee of 1886, to make a fine display. But Sawney Webb was not a typical American, given to the doctrine that a good "front" is the first essential of success. He valued homelier and less obvious virtues; and he thought that buildings were for use, that they were only *a part of the tools* of a good institution. Far less valuable as display, but in his estimation far more essential, were books. So he spent $2,200 upon sturdy wooden buildings; he spent $400 for a library building, but in it he put $8,000 worth of books, carefully and painstakingly selected by the two brothers.

There was never any question of the school's success. The educational team of "Sawney and Johnny" continued to thrive mightily. Although new teachers were added from time to time, John Webb taught the seniors entirely, and he gave life to languages often spoken of as dead; Sawney Webb taught various classes, mostly mathematics, but he was primarily an administrator. For forty years he remained in the tiny village of Bell Buckle, teaching boys of the 'teen age. In that period he produced no scholarly books; except for a few relatively unimportant side-excursions into politics, he did nothing except to run a preparatory school for boys. It seems a quiet, humdrum way of life that would never present much opportunity for positive achievemnt; yet Sawney Webb was known

throughout the land, and Webb School was father, or older brother, of many scattered and lesser known institutions.

III

Personality contributed in large degree to Sawney's prestige. He looked distinguished and picturesque, with his short, stocky body and his heavy gray-bearded head. Each Sunday afternoon, and on many mornings supposed to be given to class work, he spoke to his boys. The speeches were inspirational, exhortatory, often impromtu; but they were alive. He would stand before them, with his narrow black string tie under his left ear, and the third buttonhole of his black coat attached to the second button, and talk on every subject known to man: the biographies of great men, the announcements of new scientific discoveries, school events, current happenings, and the Civil War. But above all he delved into his own memory for stories of great men and great days. Somehow he could catch up an audience of boys and hold it with wit, humor, and the dramatic flair of a born *raconteur;* and he made each story carry the principles of clean living and of great deeds. After boys had grown into men, they spread the stories of Sawney Webb, until his maxims and his personality were known and felt in regions far from Bell Buckle.

He made of teaching a drama in miniature. Not only were his speeches calculated to awaken interest and ambition in his students; but his method of teaching competitively, so that each student sought daily to lead the class, kept the scholastic air electric with excitement. Equally dramatic were his punishments, when the calm, sad-voiced Sawney would tell some youngster, "You have been on that problem two days; if you do not have it tomorrow, I shall have to whip you"; or the actual though infrequent whippings that did at times become necessary (for he had the greatest contempt for what he called the "moral suasion" theory of pedagogy); or best of all, when he could invent some punishment worthy of the *Mikado* to fit some unusual crime, as when he made one boy who had run off to go fishing try his luck for hours with rod and hook in a rain

barrel. Legend tells of a "classical cow" which kicked violently when a small boy, stationed immediately behind it, missed a Latin verb or Greek noun, in the sessions held for refractory students after school was over; and not until years later did it become generally known that a canny master had taught the cow to kick when he milked with only one hand. Such stories grew and multiplied with the years, until the body of authenic and fictitious legend surrounding Sawney Webb was in truth something to conjure with. Yet what boy, or what group of men, on seeing and hearing him, could doubt that these stories were true?

With the skill of the born teacher, he used every device available to hold the attention of students. But these devices were only the trimmings, the outward apparel that attracted most attention because they were most obvious. Inevitably, there was a deeper, sounder reason for the success of Webb School, and for Webb's own popularity and influence.

He was a master of the essential theories and practices of education. That alone may sound easy and simple, but such mastery is given to few men. Sawney's school had one purpose, and only one: to give a boy the mental training and discipline which comes from a reasonable and fairly exact mastery of the humanistic subjects, specifically Greek, Latin, English, and mathematics. With such mastery must come also development of character, an evolution not merely of boy into man, but of boy into gentleman, in the old and best sense of that word; but even this development was by its very nature incidental. A boy could be encouraged to build and strengthen character, but no man could build it for him. The primary purpose of education was to infuse in boys a love for learning, to permeate their lives as well as their minds with the nobility and grandeur of classic literatures.

Perhaps some idea of his intention can be given from his conception of mathematics in a school. For him, it was neither an abstract science nor a business convenience; it was an art which through its severity of form approached nearest to perfect beauty. Yet small boys struggling with algebraic formulae could not be

expected to grasp this severe beauty; they must first learn the subject, by force and corporal punishment if necessary. This was a last resort; before that, the teacher must put all his skill and knowledge, all his dramatic individuality, to the effort of kindling young animal minds into realization that here was indeed some dim but attractive art that might some day be appreciated in its entirety. Under his hand the subject and the class were both alive.

That idea of knowledge he carried into other fields. To arouse intellectual interest and curiosity, to mold character, to infuse ambition—these were the purposes of his general talks. They were *applied* education. They gave an immediate, practical, and yet a philosophical point to the minute drudgery of day-to-day work. And he carried his precepts into practice: for example, his constant admonition "never do anything on the sly" (which later became famous as "the only *Don't* in his gospel of *Do*") was reinforced and made real by his early inauguration of the honor system.

But he never confused this need for intellectual curiosity with the requirements of the basic curriculum in his school, or in any school. Only the tried and certain courses had a place there. Often men would tell him that their sons must have stenography or geography or even telegraphy; often in the later years, when college entrance requirements had become standardized, college presidents and governing boards would write that he must teach chemistry or physics or history and must use an English Grammar. Steadily he refused, for he believed that teachers commonly undertook too much. "A man spreads very thin when he spreads himself over the whole earth. . . . When I turn out students, they at least can pass the examinations in these subjects; they know them." And it is on record that some Webb students offered for college entrance and passed the examinations in history solely on the basis of reading done in the school library. His students won honors at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Vanderbilt with such regularity that one eastern college president remarked, "The best students we get come from a small school in Tennessee known as 'Old Sawney's.'" Because his studies

were definite and in a large way related to life, the student prospered; and the school became famous.

Undoubtedly Sawney Webb would have gained recognition in almost any place, at almost any time. But the misfortunes of the South contributed to his own fortunes as teacher of a private preparatory school. When he came to Tennessee he founded a school that was peculiarly his own and highly individualized, though it served as model for many similar schools throughout the South; the standardized requirements of a later period would have hampered, though they could hardly have destroyed, the value of man and teacher. With the growth of the public school system has come the inevitable decline of the private school; with the education of the millions has come a softer and more varied curriculum which trains boys for vocational work, for leadership (in the Y.M.C.A. sense of the word), and for a hundred other things. Organized extra-curricular activities which Sawney had rejected have generally become at least as important as the formal studies. But in these varied process mental discipline has gone by the board; to a large extent the old idea of a cultured, humane gentleman as the finest product of education has gone with it. Stenography has replaced Greek, and manual training is reckoned more vital than Latin. That day Sawney Webb lived to see, but in his own school he would not permit such changes. A proud bulwark against superficial ideas of progress, Webb School remains classical and faithful to the noble conception of an older, less hurried day.

That explains another more subtle reason for his popularity. Sawney Webb was the apotheosis of a type long revered in the South, and now almost completely gone. He was the schoolmaster. Dotted over that section of the country were many other schoolmasters, less famous but no less respected locally; for almost every county had its own renowned academy or "college." These men too were individualists, and their methods of teaching seemed vicious and antiquated to the professional educators who were busily attempting to make teaching a science. They taught in many cases with a sternness that made the rod omnipresent, and that makes a softer genera-

tion shake its collective head; but at least they taught. In most cases such men knew their subjects, however little they might know methods; to them Latin and Greek and mathematics were vividly real, and students who could not be persuaded of that reality were quickly forced at least to learn the subject-matter. Only the strong survived educationally; but the survivors possessed disciplined minds and sound, if often limited, knowledge. Each man set his own standards, but good teachers could and did draw students from the public schools; and the incompetents drifted into other kinds of business. In general, they were colorful men, and they shaped the thoughts and lives of many of their students. Of this type Sawney Webb was preëminent, but men in other sections could understand and admire him the more because he was only a greater personification of a well-beloved local person.

IV

There are only a few additional facts to record. Webb's niche in life, as he himself said, was the schoolroom; and he stepped out of that niche rarely. But a man's business was also with life, and sometimes the progress of events seemed to call for more direct and immediate action than teaching permitted. On such occasions Sawney Webb became a political orator, stumping the State for principles that he believed to be just. When Tennessee seemed likely to repudiate its debts, he took an active part, advocating with all his power the payment of the debts in full. In 1886 he canvassed the State in favor of the prohibition amendment to the State Constitution; and in 1913 he became a member of the governing board of the Anti-Saloon League, a position he held until his death. Always he fought for temperance, to the point of deserting the Democratic party in order to support the dry and Republican Ben W. Hooper against Governor Malcolm R. Patterson.

Twice he received political honors. In 1896 he campaigned vigorously for sound money, at a time when William Jennings Bryan threatened to sweep an emotional nation off its feet; and he was a delegate to old-school Democratic convention at Indianapolis

which nominated Palmer and Buckner as presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Seventeen years later he was unexpectedly elected United States senator to fill the unexpired term of the late Robert Love Taylor. Webb had made no effort to secure the place, and his unanimous election came as a complete surprise, since John K. Shields had already been elected for the regular term, and Governor Hooper had previously appointed Newell Sanders to the place. When the Democratic Senate and House in joint convention ignored the Republican Governor and his appointee, Webb succeeded Senator Sanders, although he was formally elected to succeed Taylor.

As senator, he served for a month and a day; but he enjoyed that brief interval of public life immensely. He introduced one bill, to prohibit desecration of the flag, and made one notable speech in favor of the Webb-Kenyon bill (named for Representative E. Y. Webb of North Carolina), which prohibited the shipment of liquor into dry states. He also made a eulogistic speech on his predeccessor. But, his month of service over, he returned to Bell Buckle without regret, and with no ambition to hold other political offices.

These chores were appropriate interludes, hardly more important to him than his attendance of educational associations, and certainly no more important than thrice serving as member of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He valued such honors as they deserved to be valued, yet always mindful that they were incidental; and he was equally proud of the honorary LL.D. degrees which Erskine College conferred on him in 1919, and the University of North Carolina in 1922. It seemed to him that being a good schoolmaster implied also being a good citizen and a good churchman, but a man was naturally gratified when such qualities were recognized by other people.

His son, William Robert, Junior, joined him in the school in 1897, after his graduation from the University of North Carolina. Gradually Sawney gave up teaching, until he became in fact as well as in name the headmaster; after 1908 he had little to do with the routine conduct of the school. But he continued to make speeches to the

students, and he was also in great demand as a speaker in other localities. For his many lectures on temperance he received, he once said, only a pocketknife as payment; but he had never learned to value money as the sole recompense for his services, and he spoke as readily and with as much enthusiasm in the smallest hamlet as in Nashville or Chattanooga. Many times his name was suggested for some political office, but Sawney steadily refused every inducement.

The years rolled peacefully on. Only the death of his brother John brought great sadness to him. The children were a constant source of comfort: all of them were prospering moderately, as he would have wished, and several of them in Tennessee and California were carrying on his ideas of education. He was content with life. And Sawney Webb had become a tradition in the State, and in less degree throughout the South. He was the schoolmaster of Tennessee and recognized as the State's unofficial "first citizen."

Death ended that contentment on December 20, 1926, after a brief illness. He was eighty-four, a good Christian; and he was not afraid to die. A few days before his death he dictated to his son Will a final message to all "his boys," and that farewell expressed tersely and characteristically his philosophy of life: "Give the boys my love, and tell them to lead a large life. A large life is no piffle, but one that makes the world better because you have lived. If the world is better because of you, you are a wonderful success. If it is worse because of you, you are a miserable failure. When you come to the end, you'll find that the only things that are worthwhile are character and the help you have given to other people. The first step in the development of character is loyalty and obedience to your parents, your teachers, and your God. And don't forget—never do anything that you have to hide."

A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

(From *I'll Take My Stand,* by Twelve Southerners, 1930)

The authors contributing to this book are Southerners, well acquainted with one another and of similar tastes, though not necessarily living in the same physical community, and perhaps only at this moment aware of themselves as a single group of men. By conversation and exchange of letters over a number of years it had developed that they entertained many convictions in common, and it was decided to make a volume in which each one should furnish his views upon a chosen topic. This was the general background. But background and consultation as to the various topics were enough; there was to be no further collaboration. And so no single author is responsible for any view outside his own article. It was through the good fortune of some deeper agreement that the book was expected to achieve its unity. All the articles bear in the same sense upon the book's title-subject: all tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; and all as much as agree that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, Agrarian *versus* Industrial.

But after the book was under way it seemed a pity if the contributors, limited as they were within their special subjects, should stop short of showing how close their agreements really were. On the contrary, it seemed that they ought to go on and make themselves known as a group already consolidated by a set of principles which could be stated with a good deal of particularity. This might prove useful for the sake of future reference, if they should undertake any further joint publication. It was then decided to prepare a general introduction for the book which would state briefly the common convictions of the group. This is the statement. To it every one of the contributors in this book has subscribed.

Nobody now proposes for the South, or for any other community in this country, an independent political destiny. That idea is thought to have been finished in 1865. But how far shall the South surrender its moral, social, and economic autonomy to the victorious principle of Union? That question remains open. The South is a minority section that has hitherto been jealous of its minority right to live its own kind of life. The South scarcely hopes to determine the other sections, but it does propose to determine itself, within the utmost limits of legal action. Of late, however, there is the melancholy fact that the South itself has wavered a little and shown signs of wanting to join up behind the common or American industrial ideal. It is against that tendency that this book is written. The younger Southerners, who are being converted frequently to the industrial gospel, must come back to the support of the Southern tradition. They must be persuaded to look very critically at the advantages of becoming a "new South" which will be only an undistinguished replica of the usual industrial community.

But there are many other minority communities opposed to industrialism, and wanting a much simpler economy to live by. The communities and private persons sharing the agrarian tastes are to be found widely within the Union. Proper living is a matter of the intelligence and the will, does not depend on the local climate or geography, and is capable of a definition which is general and not Southern at all. Southerners have a filial duty to discharge to their own section. But their cause is precarious and they must seek alliances with sympathetic communities everywhere. The members of the present group would be happy to be counted as members of a national agrarian movement.

Industrialism is the economic organization of the collective American society. It means the decision of society to invest its economic resources in the applied sciences. But the word science has acquired a certain sanctitude. It is out of order to quarrel with science in the abstract, or even with the applied sciences when their applica-

tions are made subject to criticism and intelligence. The capitalization of the applied sciences has now become extravagant and uncritical; it has enslaved our human energies to a degree now clearly felt to be burdensome. The apologists of industrialism do not like to meet this charge directly; so they often take refuge in saying that they are devoted simply to science! They are really devoted to the applied sciences and to practical production. Therefore it is necessary to employ a certain skepticism even at the expense of the Cult of Science, and to say, It is an Americanism, which looks innocent and disinterested, but really is not either.

The contribution that science can make to labor is to render it easier by the help of a tool or a process, and to assure the laborer of his perfect economic security while he is engaged upon it. Then it can be performed with leisure and enjoyment. But the modern laborer has not exactly received this benefit under the industrial regime. His labor is hard, its tempo is fierce, and his employment is insecure. The first principle of a good labor is that it must be effective, but the second principle is that it must be enjoyed. Labor is one of the largest items in the human career; it is a modest demand to ask that it may partake of happiness.

The regular act of applied science is to introduce into labor a labor-saving device or a machine. Whether this is a benefit depends on how far it is advisable to save the labor. The philosophy of applied science is generally quite sure that the saving of labor is a pure gain, and that the more of it the better. This is to assume that labor is an evil, that only the end of labor or the material product is good. On this assumption labor becomes mercenary and servile, and it is no wonder if many forms of modern labor are accepted without resentment though they are evidently brutalizing. The act of labor as one of the happy functions of human life has been in effect abandoned, and is practiced solely for its rewards.

Even the apologists of industrialism have been obliged to admit that some economic evils follow in the wake of the machines. These

are such as overproduction, unemployment, and a growing inequality in the distribution of wealth. But the remedies proposed by the apologists are always homeopathic. They expect the evils to disappear when we have bigger and better machines, and more of them. Their remedial programs, therefore, look forward to more industrialism. Sometimes they see the system righting itself spontaneously and without direction: they are Optimists. Sometimes they rely on the benevolence of capital, or the militancy of labor, to bring about a fairer division of the spoils: they are Co-operationists or Socialists. And sometimes they expect to find super-engineers, in the shape of Boards of Control, who will adapt production to consumption and regulate prices and guarantee business against fluctuations: they are Sovietists. With respect to these last it must be insisted that the true Sovietists or Communists—if the term may be used here in the European sense—are the Industrialists themselves. They would have the government set up an economic superorganization, which in turn would become the government. We therefore look upon the Communist menace as a menace indeed, but not as a Red one; because it is simply according to the blind drift of our industrial development to expect in America at last much the same economic system as that imposed by violence upon Russia in 1917.

Turning to consumption, as the grand end which justifies the evil of modern labor, we find that we have been deceived. We have more time in which to consume, and many more products to be consumed. But the tempo of our labors communicates itself to our satisfactions, and these also become brutal and hurried. The constitution of the natural man probably does not permit him to shorten his labor-time and enlarge his consuming-time indefinitely. He has to pay the penalty in satiety and aimlessness. The modern man has lost his sense of vocation.

Religion can hardly expect to flourish in an industrial society. Religion is our submission to the general intention of a nature that

is fairly inscrutable; it is the sense of our rôle as creatures within it. But nature industrialized, transformed into cities and artificial habitations, manufactured into commodities, is no longer nature but a highly simplified picture of nature. We receive the illusion of having power over nature, and lose the sense of nature as something mysterious and contingent. The God of nature under these conditions is merely an amiable expression, a superfluity, and the philosophical understanding ordinarily carried in the religious experience is not there for us to have.

Nor do the arts have a proper life under industrialism, with the general decay of sensibility which attends it. Art depends, in general, like religion, on a right attitude to nature; and in particular on



a free and disinterested observation of nature that occurs only in leisure. Neither the creation nor the understanding of works of art is possible in an industrial age except by some local and unlikely suspension of the industrial drive.

The amenities of life suffer under the curse of a strictly-business or industrial civilization. They consist in such practices as manners, conversation, hospitality, sympathy, family life, romantic love—in the social exchanges which reveal and develop sensibility in human affairs. If religion and the arts are founded on right relations of man-to-nature, these are founded on right relations of man-to-man.

Apoligists of industrialism are even inclined to admit that its actual processes may have upon its victims the spiritual effects just described. But they think that all can be made right by extraordinary educational efforts, by all sorts of cultural institutions and endowments. They would cure the poverty of the contemporary spirit by hiring experts to instruct it in spite of itself in the historic culture. But salvation is hardly to be encountered on that road. The trouble with the life-pattern is to be located at its economic base, and we cannot rebuild it by pouring in soft materials from the top. The young men and women in colleges, for example, if they are already placed in a false way of life, cannot make more than an inconsequential acquaintance with the arts and humanities transmitted to them. Or else the understanding of these arts and humanities will but make them the more wretched in their own destitution.

The "Humanists" are too abstract. Humanism, properly speaking, is not an abstract system, but a culture, the whole way in which we live, act, think, and feel. It is a kind of imaginatively balanced life lived out in a definite social tradition. And, in the concrete, we believe that this, the genuine humanism, was rooted in the agrarian life of the older South and of other parts of the country that shared in such a tradition. It was not an abstract moral "check" derived from the classics—it was not soft material poured in from the top. It was deeply founded in the way of life itself—in its tables, chairs, portraits, festivals, laws, marriage customs. We cannot recover our native humanism by adopting some standard of taste that is critical enough to question the contemporary arts but not critical

enough to question the social and economic life which is their ground.

The tempo of the industrial life is fast, but that is not the worst of it; it is accelerating. The ideal is not merely some set form of industrialism, with so many stable industries, but industrial progress, or an incessant extension of industrialization. It never proposes a specific goal; it initiates the infinite series. We have not merely capitalized certain industries; we have capitalized the laboratories and inventors, and undertaken to employ all the labor-saving devices that come out of them. But a fresh labor-saving device introduced into an industry does not emancipate the laborers in that industry so much as it evicts them. Applied at the expense of agriculture, for example, the new processes have reduced the part of the population supporting itself upon the soil to a smaller and smaller fraction. Of course no single labor-saving process is fatal; it brings on a period of unemployed labor and unemployed capital, but soon a new industry is devised which will put them both to work again, and a new commodity is thrown upon the market. The laborers were sufficiently embarrassed in the meantime, but, according to the theory, they will eventually be taken care of. It is now the public which is embarrassed; it feels obligated to purchase a commodity for which it had expressed no desire, but it is invited to make its budget equal to the strain. All might be well, and stability and comfort might again obtain, but for this: partly because of industrial ambitions and partly because of the repressed creative impulse must break out somewhere, there will be a stream of further labor-saving devices in all industries, and the cycle will have to be repeated over and over. The result is an increasing disadjustment and instability.

It is an inevitable consequence of industrial progress that production greatly outruns the rate of natural consumption. To overcome the disparity, the producers, disguised as the pure idealists of progress, must coerce and wheedle the public into being loyal

and steady consumers, in order to keep the machines running. So the rise of modern advertising—along with its twin, personal salesmanship—is the most significant development of our industrialism. Advertising means to persuade the consumers to want exactly what the applied sciences are able to furnish them. It consults the happiness of the consumer no more than it consulted the happiness of the laborer. It is the great effort of a false economy of life to approve itself. But its task grows more difficult every day.

It is strange, of course, that a majority of men everywhere could ever as with one mind become enamored of industrialism: a system that has so little regard for individual wants. There is evidently a kind of thinking that rejoices in setting up a social objective which has no relation to the individual. Men are prepared to sacrifice their private dignity and happiness to an abstract social ideal, and without asking whether the social ideal produces the welfare of any individual man whatsoever. But this is absurd. The responsibility of men is for their own welfare and that of their neighbors; not for the hypothetical welfare of some fabulous creature called society.

Opposed to the industrial society is the agrarian, which does not stand in particular need of definition. An agrarian society is hardly one that has no use at all for industries, for professional vocations, for scholars and artists, and for the life of cities. Technically, perhaps, an agrarian society is one in which agriculture is the leading vocation, whether for wealth, for pleasure, or for prestige—a form of labor that is pursued with intelligence and leisure, and that becomes the model to which the other forms approach as well as they may. But an agrarian regime will be secured readily enough where the superfluous industries are not allowed to rise against it. The theory of agrarianism is that the culture of the soil is the best and most sensitive of vocations, and that therefore it should have the economic preference and enlist the maximum number of workers.

These principles do not intend to be very specific in proposing any practical measures. How may the little agrarian community resist the Chamber of Commerce of its county seat, which is always trying to import some foreign industry that cannot be assimilated to the life-pattern of the community? Just what must the Southern leaders do to defend the traditional Southern life? How may the Southern and the Western agrarians unite for effective action? Should the agrarian forces try to capture the Democratic party, which historically is so closely affiliated with the defense of individualism, the small community, the state, the South? Or must the agrarians—even the Southern ones—abandon the Democratic party to its fate and try a new one? What legislation could most profitably be championed by the powerful agrarians in the Senate of the United States? What anti-industrial measures might promise to stop the advances of industrialism, or even undo some of them, with the least harm to those concerned? What policy should be pursued by the educators who have a tradition at heart? These and many other questions are of the greatest importance, but they cannot be answered here.

For, in conclusion, this much is clear: If a community, or a section, or a race, or an age, is groaning under industrialism, and well aware that it is an evil dispensation, it must find the way to throw it off. To think that this cannot be done is pusillanimous. And if the whole community, section, race, or age thinks it cannot be done, then it has simply lost its political genius and doomed itself to impotence.

POETS WITHOUT LAURELS

JOHN CROWE RANSOM (B.A.'09)

The poets I refer to in the title are the "moderns": those whom a small company of adept readers enjoys, perhaps enormously, but the general public detests; those in whose hands poetry as a living art has lost its public support.

Consequently I do not refer to such poets as Edna St. Vincent Millay and Robert Frost, who are evidently influenced by modernism without caring to "go modern" in the sense of joining the revolution; which is very much as if they had stopped at a mild or parlor variety of socialism, when all about them the brave, or at least the doctrinaire, were marching under the red banner. Probably they are wise in their time; they have laurels deservedly and wear them gracefully. But they do not define the issue which I wish to discuss. And still less do I refer to poets like E. A. Robinson, Sturge Moore, and John Masefield, who are even less modern; though I have no intention of questioning their laurels either. I refer to poets with no laurels.

I do not wish to seem to hold the public responsible for their condition, as if it had suddenly become phlegmatic, cruel, and philistine. The poets have certainly for their part conducted themselves peculiarly. They could not have estranged the public more completely if they had tried; and smart fellows as they are, they know very well what they have been doing, and what they are still stubborn in doing, and what the consequences are.

For they have failed more and more flagrantly, more and more deliberately, to identify themselves with the public interests, as if expressly to renounce the kind affections which poets had courted for centuries. Accordingly, they do not only encounter public indifference, they sometimes encounter active hostility. A Pulitzer committeeman, I hear, says about some modernist poet whose book is up for judgment: "He will never get the award except over my

dead body." The violence of the remark seems to exceed the occasion, but it is not exceptional.

Poets used to be bards and patriots, priests and prophets, keepers of the public conscience, and naturally men of public importance. Society crowned them with wreaths of laurel, according to the tradition which comes to us from the Greeks and is perpetuated by official custom in England—and in Oklahoma. Generally the favor must have been gratefully received. But modern poets are of another breed. It is as if all at once they had lost their prudence as well as their piety, and formed a compact to unclasp the chaplet from their brows, inflicting upon themselves the humility of delaureation, and retiring from public responsibility and honors. It is this phenomenon which has thrown critical theory into confusion.

Sir Philip Sidney made the orthodox defense of poetry on the ground of the poet's service to patriotism and virtue:

> He doth not only show the way, but giveth so
> sweet a prospect into the way, as will
> entice any man to enter into it.

And what was the technique of enticement?

> With a tale forsooth he cometh unto you, with a
> tale which holdeth children from play,
> and old men from the chimney corner.

The poets, therefore, told entrancing tales, which had morals. But the fact was, also, that the poets were not always content to win to virtue by indirection, or enticement, but were prepared to preach with almost no disguise, and to become sententious and repetitious, and the literature which they created is crowded with precise maxims for the moralists. There it stands on the shelves now. Sometimes the so-called poet has been only a moralist with a poetic manner. And all the poets famous in our tradition, or very nearly all, have been poets of a powerful moral cast.

So I shall try a preliminary definition of the poet's traditional function on behalf of society: he proposed to make virtue delicious.

He compounded a moral effect with an aesthetic effect. The total effect was not a pure one, but it was rich, and relished highly. The name of the moral effect was goodness; the name of the aesthetic effect was beauty. Perhaps these did not have to co-exist, but the planners of society saw to it that they should; they called upon the artists to reinforce morality with charm. The artists obliged.

When they had done so, the public did not think of attempting to distinguish in its experience as reader the glow which was aesthetic from the glow which was moral. Most persons probably could not have done this; many persons cannot do it today. There is yet no general recognition of the possibility that an aesthetic effect may exist by itself, independent of morality or any other useful set of ideas. But the modern poet is intensely concerned with this possibility, and he has disclaimed social responsibility in order to secure this pure aesthetic effect. He cares nothing, professionally, about morals, or God, or native land. He has performed a work of dissociation and purified his art.

There are distinct styles of "modernity," but I think their net results, psychologically, are about the same. I have in mind what might be called the "pure" style and what might be called the "obscure" style.

A good "pure" poem is Wallace Stevens' "Sea Surface Full of Clouds"—famous perhaps, but certainly not well known. I shall have to deal with it summarily. Time and place: "In that November off Tehuantepec." The poem has five uniform stanzas, presenting as many surface effects beheld at breakfast time "after the slopping of the sea by night grew still." The first surface made one think of rosy chocolate and gilt umbrellas; the second, of chophouse chocolate and sham umbrellas; the third, of porcelain chocolate and pied umbrellas; the fourth, of musky chocolate and frail umbrellas; the fifth, of Chinese chocolate and large umbrellas. Nothing could be more discriminating than these details, which induct us respectively into the five fields of observation. The poem has a calculated complexity, and its technical competence is so high that to study it, if you do that sort of thing, is to be happy. That it has not been

studied by a multitude of persons is due to a simple consideration which strikes us at once: the poem has no moral, political, religious, or sociological values. It is not about "res publica," the public thing. The subject matter is trifling.

Poetry of this sort, as it was practiced by some French poets of the nineteenth century, and as it is practiced by many British and American poets now, has been called pure poetry, and the name is accurate. It is nothing but poetry; it is poetry for poetry's sake, and you cannot get a moral out of it. But it was to be expected that it would never win the public at large. The impulse which led readers to the old poetry was at least as much moral as it was aesthetic, while the new poetry cannot count on any customers except those specializing in strict aesthetic effects. But the modern poets intend to rate only as poets, and would probably think it meretricious to solicit patronage by making moral overtures.

As an example of "obscure" poetry, though not the most extreme one, I cite Allen Tate's "Death of Little Boys." Here are some of its verses:

> Then you will touch at the bedside, torn in two,
> Gold curls deftly intricate with gray
> As the windowpane extends a fear to you
> From one peeled aster drenched with the wind all day. . . .
>
> Till all the guests, come in to look, turn down
> Their palms; and delirium assails the cliff
> Of Norway where you ponder, and your little town
> Reels like a sailor drunk in his rotten skiff.

There is evidently a wide difference between Stevens and Tate, as poets. Tate has an important subject, and his poem is a human document, with a contagious fury about it: Stevens, pursuing purity, does not care to risk such a subject. But Tate, as if conscious that he is close to moralizing sententiousness, builds up deliberately, I imagine, an effect of obscurity; for example, he does not care to explain the private meaning of his windowpane and his Norwegian cliff; or else, by some feat, he permits these bright features to belong

to his total image without permitting them to reveal any precise meaning, either for himself or for his reader. Stevens, however, is objective from beginning to end; he completes all his meanings, knowing these will have little or no moral importance.

Pure or obscure, the modern poet manages not to slip into the old-fashioned moral-beautiful compound. If pure, he will not consider a subject which lends itself to moralization; that is, a subject of practical interest. It is his chief problem to find then a subject which has any interest at all. If, however, he prefers the other road, he may take the subject nearest his own humanity, a subject perhaps of terrifying import; but in treating it will stop short of all moral or theoretical conclusions, and confuse his detail to the point where it leaves no positive implications.

To be more technical: it is as if the pure poet presented a subject and declined to make any prediction about it or even to start predication; and as if the obscure poet presented a subject in order to play with a great deal of important predication without ever completing any.

Personally, I prefer the rich abscure poetry to the thin pure poetry. The deaths of little boys are more exciting than the sea surfaces. It may be that the public preference, however, is otherwise. The public is inclined simply to ignore the pure poetry, because it lacks practical usefulness; but to hate the obscure poetry, because it looks important enough to attend to, and yet never yields up any specific fruit. Society, through its spokesmen the dozens of social-minded critics, who talk about the necessity of "communication," is now raging with indignation, or it may be with scorn, against the obscure poetry which this particular generation of poets has deposited. Nevertheless, both types of poetry, obscure as well as pure, aim at poetic automony; that is, speaking roughly, at purity.

Modern poetry in this respect is like modern painting. European painting used to be nearly as social a thing as poetry. It illustrated the themes prescribed by the priests, whether popularly (Raphael) or esoterically and symbolically (Michaelangelo); did the portraits of kings and cardinals, and the scenes of battles and great occasions;

worked up allegorical and sentimental subjects. But more or less suddenly it asserted its independence. So we find Impressionists, doing the most innocent tricks with landscapes and mere objects; and we find Cézanne, painting so many times and so lovingly his foolish little bowl of fruits. The procedure was a strange one for the moral laity, who could detect nothing of importance there; and indeed nothing of public importance was there, only matters of technical interest to painters, and to persons who found painting sufficient. Later, and today, we find painters taking up the most heroic human material again in the most promising manner, yet arriving at no explicit meaning and, on the whole, simply playing with its powerful symbols. (Not all painters, of course.)

Apostate, illaureate, and doomed to outlawry the modern poets may be. I have the feeling that modernism is an unfortunate road for them to have taken. But it was an inevitable one. It is not hard to defend them from imputations against their honor and their logic. It is probably a question of whether we really know them, and understand their unusual purpose, and the powerful inhibitions they impose upon themselves.

But let us approach the matter from a slightly different angle. Poets have had to become modern because the age is modern. Its modernism envelops them like a sea, or an air. Nothing in their thought can escape it.

Modern poetry is pure poetry. The motive behind it cannot be substantially different from the motive behind the other modern activities, which is certainly the driving force of all our modernism. What is its name? "Purism" would be exact, except that it does not have the zealous and contriving sound we want. "Platonism" would do, provided there were time to come to an agreement about the essential meaning of Plato's act. I think the name "Puritanism" will describe this motive, if I may extend a little a term whose application in history has been mostly religious and moral.

Our period differs outwardly from other periods because it first differs inwardly. Its spiritual temper is puritanical; that is, it craves to perfect the parts of experience separately or in their purity, and

is a series of isolated perfections. These have often been brilliant. But perhaps the modern program, on the whole, is not the one under which men maintain their best health and spirits. A little fear to that effect is beginning to cloud the consciousness of the brilliant moderns.

And here I conclude my defense of the modern poet. He is a good workman, and his purpose is really quite orthodox in its modernism. But it is no better.

The development of modern civilization has been a grand progression in which Puritanism has invaded first one field and then another.

The first field perhaps was religion. The religious impulse used to join to itself and dominate and hold together nearly all the fields of human experience; politics, science, art, and even industry, and by all means moral conduct. But Puritanism came in the form of the Protestant Reformation and separated religion from all its partners. Perhaps the most important of these separations was that which lopped off from religion the aesthetic properties which simple-hearted devotees and loving artists had given it. The aesthetic properties constituted the myth, which to the tempermental Protestants became superstition, and the ceremonial, which became idolatry. Under the progressive zeal of the Reformation the being of God has become rarefied in the degree that it has been purified, until we find difficulty in grasping it, and there are people who tell me, just as there are people who tell the reader, that religion as a living force here in the Western world is spent. Theology is purer or more abstract than ever before, but it would seem to belong exclusively to theologians, and it cannot by itself assemble together all those who once delighted in the moral precepts, the music and the pomp, the social communion, and the concrete Godhead, of the synthetic institution which was called religion.

Next, or perhaps at the same time, Puritanism applied itself to morality. Broad as the reach of morality may be, it is distinct enough as an experience to be capable of purification. We may say that its destiny was to become what we know as sociology, a body

of positivistic science. It had to be emancipated from its religious overlords, whose authority, after all, was not a moral one. Then it had to be emancipated from the dictates of taste, or aesthetic, and this latter emancipation was the harder, and perhaps the more needless. The Greeks, though they were incipient Puritans, scarcely attempted it. They had a compound phrase meaning "beautiful-good," which even their philosophers used habitually as the name of something elemental and indissoluble. Suspicion was aroused in Greeks by a goodness which could not produce beauty, just as to a man like Spenser the idea of virtue was incomplete until it flowered into poetic form, and just as to the sympathetic French artist our new American liberty was not quite won until identifiable with an able-bodied demi-goddess lifting a torch. The splitting up of the moral-beautiful compound for the sake of the pure moral article is visibly at work in the New Testament, and in the bourgeois cult of plainness in seventeenth-century England, and in the finicky private life of a Puritan moralist like Kant, and today in moral or sociological treatises (and authors) which neither exhibit nor discuss charm. Now, it is true that we moralize with "maximum efficiency" when we do it technically, or abstractly, but when that comes to be the rule we no longer approach a moral discussion with anything but a moral interest. To be moral is no longer to be "decent," and it looks as if moral appeal had become something less wide and less instant than it was.

Then Puritanism worked upon politics. I am not prepared to go deeply into this, but it is evident that purification consisted in taking the state away from the church, from the monarch, from the feudal aristocracy, from any other concrete attachments, in order that it might propel itself by the force of pure statecraft. Progress in this direction meant constitutionalism, parlimentarianism, republicanism. A modern state like ours is transparent in the perfection of its logic. But that does not make it the more realistic. It is obliged to count upon a universal and continuous will on the part of the citizens to accept an abstract formula of political action. But such a will may not be there. The population, not being composed exclusively of

politicians, is inclined to delegate statecraft to those who profess it. The old mixed states had a greater variety of loyalties to appeal to.

Puritanism is an ideal which not all persons are strong enough to realize, but only those with great power of concentration. Its best chance of success lies in individual projects. Accordingly, Puritanism fairly came into its own in the vast multitude of private enterprises which go together to make modern science. Galileo and Kepler found science captive to religious dogma. America, the paradise of puritanism, was not yet in being, but England was; and there presently, while other Puritanisms were going on, Lord Bacon was able to anticipate the complete emancipation of science by virtue of its adoption of the pure experimental method. Now, there have been other incubi besides religion resting upon science at one time or another; and chiefly the tendency of poetry to haunt its deliberations. Poetry is a figurative way of expression, science is a technical or abstract way; but since science employs language, the figurative associations are hard to keep out. In earlier days poetry kept close to science, and it did not seem so strange if Lucretius wanted to set forth the body of accepted science in verse. But poetry now cannot attend science into its technical labyrinth. The result is greater success for scientists, but not necessarily their greater happiness as men; and the general understanding on our part that we will follow science if we are scientists, but otherwise will leave it to the scientists.

It was but one step that Puritanism had to go from there into the world of business, where the material sciences are systematically applied. The rise of the modern business world is a development attendant upon the freedom which it has enjoyed; upon business for business's sake, or pure business, or "laissez faire," with such unconditioned principles as efficiency, technological improvement, and maximum productivity. If I wished to attack the record of business, I should by now have been long anticipated. It is common opinion that business as a self-contained profession has created business men who are defective in their humanity; that the conduct of business has made us callous to personal relations and to social justice; and

that many of the occupations which business has devised are, in the absence of aesthetic standards, servile.

All these exclusions and specializations, and many more, have been making modern life what it is. It is significant that every specialization on the list has had to resist the insidious charms of aesthetic experience before its own perfection could arise. (Evidently the aesthetic interest is remarkably catholic among our faculties in its affinities; ready to attach itself easily to almost any sort of moment; a ubiquitous element in experience, it might be thought, which it would be unhealthy to cast out.) But the energy of so deep an impulse as Puritanism had to flow through all the channels, and to come to its last outlet in a pure art, a pure poetry. Those who have not observed the necessity may choose to hold its predestined agents the poets in contempt, or in amazement. The poets are in the spirit of their time. On the one hand, they have been pushed out of their old attachments, whereby they used to make themselves useful to public causes, by the specialists who did not want the respective causes to be branded amateurism. On the other hand, they are moved by a universal tendency into their own appropriate kind of specialization, which can be, as they have been at pains to show, as formidable as any other.

Considerations of this kind, I feel sure, have been more or less precisely within the intuition of all modern poets, and have motivated their performance. Technically, they are quite capable of writing the old compound poetry, but they cannot bring themselves to do it; or rather, when they have composed it in unguarded moments, as modern poets still sometimes do, they are under the necessity of destroying it immediately. There is no baffling degrees of virtuosity in the old lines,

> Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!
> Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain:
> Man marks the earth with ruin, his control
> Stops with the shore.

The modern poet can accomplish just as elegant a rumination as this; but thinks it would commit him to an anachronism, for this

is the style of an older period. In that period, though it was a comparatively late one, and though this poet thought he was in advance of it, the prophets of society were still numbering and tuning their valuable reflections before they saw fit to release them; and morality, philosophy, religion, science, and art could still meet comfortably in one joint expression, though perhaps not with the same distinction they might have gained if they had had their pure and several expressions. A passage of Byron's if sprung upon an unsuspecting modern would be felt immediately as "dating"; it would be felt as something that did very well for those dark ages before the modern mind achieved its own disintegration and perfected its faculties serially.

Even as readers, we must testify readily to the force of this time-principle. We sometimes pore over an old piece of poetry for so long that we fall under its spell and forget that its spirit is not our spirit. But we began to read it in a peculiar manner; by saying to ourselves, This is early Greek epic, This is seventeenth-century English drama. By means of one of the ripest and subtlest powers in us, that is, the historical sense, we made an adaptation of our minds to its mind, and were able to suspend those centuries which had intervened. Those centuries had made our minds much more knowing and at the same time, it is to be feared, much less suggestible. Yet it is not exactly with our own minds that we are reading the old poetry; otherwise we could not read it. For when we come back to our own world there begins to function in us a different style of consciousness altogether. And if we had begun to read a poetry of this old sort by saying, This was written last night by the poet around the corner, we could not have put up with it. If we throw away impatiently a contemporaneous poetry which displays archaisms of diction, what will we do with that which displays archaisms of temper? It looks spurious; for we require our art, and the living artists require it too, to be as contemporaneous as our banking or our locomotion.

What, then, is the matter with a pure poetry? The question is really more theoretical than practical. A school, an age, is involved

by such a question, not merely some small poem or poet. And there is nothing the matter with this particular branch of purity which is not the matter with our other modern activities. All are affected by Puritanism, just as the vegetation is affected, generally and indifferently, by the climate.

It is impossible to answer the question categorically because the items are intangible. But we find ourselves reasoning about it as well as we can, which is as follows:

You may dissociate the elements of experience and exploit them separately. But then at the best you go on a schedule of small experiences, taking them in turn, and trusting that when the rotation is complete you will have missed nothing. And at the worst you will become so absorbed in some one small experience that you will forget to go on and complete the schedule; in that case you will have missed something. The theory that excellence lies in the perfection of the single functions, and that society should demand that its members be hard specialists, assumes that there is no particular harm in missing something. But I do not see why. A maniac with a fixed idea is a variety of specialist, and an absorbing specialty is a small mania.

As for poetry, it seems to me a pity that its beauty should have to be cloistered and conventual, if it is "pure," or teasing and evasive, if it is "obscure." The union of beauty with goodness and truth has been common enough to be regarded as natural. It is the dissociation which is unnatural and painful.

But when we talk about simple and compound experiences, we are evidently employing a chemical mode of speech to represent something we cannot quite make out. Units of consciousness are hard to handle scientifically; it takes more science than we have. Max Eastman thinks the future of literary criticism is bound up with the future of psychology, and very likely it is; but it is difficult to share his sanguine expectations of that science. It cannot become as effective a science as chemistry.

Nevertheless, I shall make a tentative argument from the analogy of chemistry. Lemonade is only a mechanical mixture, not very

interesting to chemists. Aside from the water, a drop of lemonade contains lemon and sugar in no standard proportions. If it tastes too sour, add sugar and if it tastes too sweet, add lemon. (And do not forget to stir the mixture.) No matter what the final proportions, you still detect in the lemonade the sweet taste and the sour; though this is too abstract a matter to bother about if the lemonade is satisfactory, for in that case you simply drink it.

Table salt, however, is a true chemical compound; a molecule of it is NaCl. Understanding this, you do not claim to know the taste either of sodium or of chlorine when you say you are acquainted with the taste of salt. Whatever the Na was and however it tasted by itself, it gave up that identity when it compounded with Cl; and *vice versa.*

NaCl is found in the state of nature, where it is much commoner than either of its constituents. But suppose the chemists decided to have nothing to do with NaCl because of its compoundness, and undertook to extract from it the pure Na and Cl to serve on the table. Suppose they made war on all the natural compounds, broke them down into the hundred or so atomic elements, and asked us to live on these alone. The beneficiaries would regard this service as well-meaning but mistaken.

But we provide the necessities for our minds and affections with more harshness than we dare use on our stomachs and bodies—so inferior in precision is our knowledge of minds to our knowledge of bodies. Poets are now under the influence of a perfectly arbitrary theory which I have called Puritanism. They pursue A, an aesthetic element thought always to have the same taste and to be the one thing desirable for poets. They will not permit the presence near it of M, the moral element, because that will produce the lemonade MA, and they do not approve of lemonade. In lemonade the A gets itself weakened and neutralized by the M.

But it is possible that MA is not a drop of lemonade after all, but a true molecule, into which the separate M and the separate A have disappeared and out of which an entirely new taste is born. The effects which we attribute to a poet like Virgil, or Milton, are on the

following order: pious, philosophical, imaginative, sonorous, and the like. But perhaps the effect which we actually receive from the poetry is not that of an aggregate or series or mechanical mixture of distinct properties but only the single effect of a compound. In that event the properties will exist separate only in our minds, by a later act of qualitative analysis, and they will not really be in the poetry in their own identities.

Is the old-fashioned full poetry a mechanical mixture like lemonade or a chemical compound like table salt? That is probably the most important question which the modern critics have opened up to speculation. There are many corollary questions along with it, like these: When does the display of doctrine in poetry incur the charge of didacticism? And must the poet also bear arms—that is, like the economist and the social reformer, view his performance in the light of a utility rather than an end?

Now some poetry, so-called, is not even lemonade, for the ingredients have not been mixed, much less compounded. Lumps of morality and image lie side by side, and are tasted in succession. T. S. Eliot thinks that this has been the character of a great deal of English poetry since the age of Dryden. Such poetry occupies some of the best room in the library, and takes up some of the best time of the earnest student of literature. It is decidedly one of the causes of that revulsion of feeling on the part of the modern poet which drives him away from the poetic tradition.

When our critical theory is complete, perhaps we shall be able to distinguish various combinations of elements passing for poetry; thus, poetry by assemblage, poetry by mixture, and poetry by composition. The last of these sound the best.

I suggest that critics and philosophers fix their most loving attention upon certain natural compounds in human experience. But I say so diffidently, and not too hopefully. It will take a long time to change the philosophical set which has come over the practice of the poets. The intellectual climate in which they live will have to be altered first.



POETRY

ALLEN TATE (B.A.'22)

Ode to the Confederate Dead

Row after row with strict impunity
The headstones yield their names to the element,
The wind whirrs without recollection;
In the riven troughs the splayed leaves
Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
To the seasonal eternity of death;
Then driven by the fierce scrutiny
Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,
They sough the rumor of mortality.

Autumn is desolation in the plot
Of a thousand acres where these memories grow
From the inexhaustible bodies that are not
Dead, but feed the grass row after rich row.
Think of the autumns that have come and gone!—
Ambitious November with the humors of the year,
With a particular zeal for every slab,
Staining the uncomfortable angels that rot
On the slabs, a wing chipped here, an arm there:
The brute curiosity of an angel's stare
Turns you, like them, to stone,
Transforms the heaving air
Till plunged to a heavier world below
You shift your sea-space blindly
Heaving, turning like the blind crab.

Dazed by the wind, only the wind
The leaves flying, plunge

You know who have waited by the wall
The twilight certainty of an animal,
Those midnight restitutions of the blood
You know—the immitigable pines, the smoky frieze
Of the sky, the sudden call: you know the rage,
The cold pool left by the mounting flood,
Of muted Zeno and Parmenides.
You who have waited for the angry resolution
Of those desires that should be yours tomorrow,
You know the unimportant shrift of death
And praise the vision
And praise the arrogant circumstance
Of those who fall
Rank upon rank, hurried beyond decision—
Here by the sagging gate, stopped by the wall.

Seeing, seeing only the leaves
Flying, plunge and expire

Turn your eyes to the immoderate past,
Turn to the inscrutable infantry rising
Demons out of the earth—they will not last.
Stonewall, Stonewall, and the sunken fields of hemp,
Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill, Bull Run.
Lost in that orient of the thick and fast
You will curse the setting sun.

Cursing only the leaves crying
Like an old man in a storm

You hear the shout, the crazy hemlocks point
With troubled fingers to the silence which
Smothers you, a mummy, in time.

The hound bitch
Toothless and dying, in a musty cellar
Hears the wind only.

Now that the salt of their blood
Stiffens the saltier oblivion of the sea,
Seals the malignant purity of the flood,
What shall we, who count our days and bow
Our heads with a commemorial woe
In the ribboned coats of grim felicity,
What shall we say of the bones, unclean,
Whose verdurous anonymity will grow?
The ragged arms, the ragged heads and eyes
Lost in these acres of the insane green?
The gray lean spiders come, they come and go;
In a tangle of willows without light
The singular screech-owl's tight
Invisible lyric seeds the mind
With the furious murmur of their chivalry.

We shall say only the leaves
Flying, plunge and expire

We shall say only, the leaves whispering
In the improbable mist of nightfall
That flies on multiple wing:
Night is the beginning and the end
And in between the ends of distraction
Waits mute speculation, the patient curse
That stones the eyes, or like the jaguar leaps
For his own image in a jungle pool, his victim.

What shall we say who have knowledge
Carried to the heart? Shall we take the act
To the grave? Shall we, more hopeful, set up the grave
In the house? The ravenous grave?

Leave now
The shut gate and the decomposing wall:
The gentle serpent, green in the mulberry bush,
Riots with his tongue through the hush—
Sentinel of the grave who counts us all!

1926-1936.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

Quem das finem, rex magne, dolorum?

Where we went in the boat was a long bay
A slingshot wide, walled in by towering stone—
Peaked margin of antiquity's delay,
And we went there out of time's monotone:

Where we went in the black hull no light moved
But a gull white-winged along the feckless wave,
The breeze, unseen but fierce as a body loved,
That boat drove onward like a willing slave:

Where we went in the small ship the seaweed
Parted and gave to us the murmuring shore
And we made feast and in our secret need
Devoured the very plates Aeneas bore:

Where derelict you see through the low twilight
The green coast that you, thunder-tossed, would win
Drop sail, and hastening to drink all night
Eat dish and bowl—to take that sweet land in!

Where we feasted and caroused on the sandless
Pebbles, affecting our day of piracy,
What prophecy of eaten plates could landless
Wanderers fulfil by the ancient sea?

We for that time might taste the famous age
Eternal here yet hidden from our eyes
When lust of power undid its stuffless rage;
They, in a wineskin, bore earth's paradise.

Let us lie down once more by the breathing side
Of Ocean, where our live forefathers sleep
As if the Known Sea still were a month wide—
Atlantis howls but is no longer steep!

What country shall we conquer, what fair land
Unman our conquest and locate our blood?
We've cracked the hemispheres with careless hand!
Now, from the Gates of Hercules we flood

Westward, westward till the barbous brine
Whelms us to the tired land where tasseling corn,
Fat beans, grapes sweeter than muscadine
Rot on the vine: in that land were we born.

SHADOW AND SHADE

The shadow streamed into the wall—
The wall, break-shadow in the blast;
We lingered wordless while a tall
Shade enclouded the shadow's cast.

The torrent of the reaching shade
Broke shadow into all its parts,
What then had been of shadow made
Found exigence in fits and starts

Where nothing properly had name
Save that still element the air,
Burnt sea of universal frame
In which impounded now we were:

I took her hand, I shut her eyes
And all her shadow clove with shade,
Shadow was crushed beyond disguise
But, being fear, was unafraid.

I asked fair shadow at my side:
What more shall fiery shade require?
We lay there in the immense tide
Of shade and shadowy desire

And saw the dusk assail the wall,
The black surge, mounting, crash the stone!
Companion of this lust, we fall,
I said, lest we should die alone.

THE WOLVES

There are wolves in the next room waiting
With heads bent low, thrust out, breathing
As nothing in the dark: between them and me
A white door patched with light from the hall
Where it seems never (so still is the house)
A man has walked from the front door to the stair.
It has all been forever. A beast claws the floor.
I have brooded on angels and archfiends
But no man has ever sat where the next room's
Crowded with wolves, and for the honor of man
I affirm that never have I before. Now while
I have looked for the evening star at a cold window
And whistled when Arcturus spilt his light,
I've heard the wolves scuffle, and said: So this
Is man; so—what better conclusion is there—
The day will not follow night, and the heart
Of man has a little dignity, but less patience
Than a wolf's, and a duller sense that cannot
Smell its own mortality. (This and other
Meditations will be suited to other times
After dog silence howls my epitaph)
Now remember courage, go to the door,
Open it and see whether coiled on the bed
Or cringing by the wall a savage beast
Maybe with golden hair, with deep eyes
Like a bearded spider on a sunlit floor
Will snarl—and man can never be alone.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM (B.A.'09)

Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter

There was such speed in her little body,
And such lightness in her footfall,
It is no wonder that her brown study
Astonishes us all.

Her wars were bruited in our high window.
We looked among orchard trees and beyond,
Where she took arms against her shadow,
Or harried unto the pond

The lazy geese, like a snow cloud
Dripping their snow on the green grass,
Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud,
Who cried in goose, Alas,

For the tireless heart within the little
Lady with rod that made them rise
From their noon apple dreams, and scuttle
Goose-fashion under the skies!

But now go the bells, and we are ready;
In one house we are sternly stopped
To say we are vexed at her brown study,
Lying so primly propped.

JANET WAKING

Beautifully Janet-slept
Till it was deeply morning. She woke then
And thought about her dainty-feathered hen,
To see how it had kept.

One kiss she gave her mother,
Only a small one gave she to her daddy
Who would have kissed each curl of his shining baby;
No kiss at all for her brother.

"Old Chucky, Old Chucky!" she cried,
Running on little pink feet upon the grass
To Chucky's house, and listening. But alas,
Her Chucky had died.

It was a transmogrifying bee
Came droning down on Chucky's old bald head
And sat and put the poison. It scarcely bled,
But how exceedingly

And purply did the knot
Swell with the venom and communicate
Its rigour! Now the poor comb stood up straight
But Chucky did not.

So there was Janet
Kneeling on the wet grass, crying her brown hen
(Translated far beyond the daughters of men)
To rise and walk upon it.

And weeping fast as she had breath
Janet implored us, "Wake her from her sleep!"
And would not be instructed in how deep
Was the forgetful kingdom of death.

DEAD BOY

The little cousin is dead, by foul subtraction,
A green bough from Virginia's aged tree,
And neither the country kin love the transaction
Nor some of the world of outer dark, like me.

He was not a beautiful boy, nor good, nor clever,
A black cloud full of storms too hot for keeping,
A sword beneath his mother's heart,—yet never
Woman bewept her babe as this is weeping.

A pig with a pasty face, I had always said.
Squealing for cookies, kinned by pure pretense
With a noble house. But the little man quite dead,
I can see the forebears' antique lineaments.

The elder men have strode by the box of death
To the wide flag porch, and muttering low send round
The bruit of the day. O friendly waste of breath!
Their hearts are hurt with a deep dynastic wound.

He was pale and little, the foolish neighbors say;
The first-fruits, saith the preacher, the Lord hath taken;
But this was the old tree's late branch wrenched away,
Aggrieving the sapless limbs, the shorn and shaken.

SPECTRAL LOVERS

By night they haunted a thicket of April mist,
As out of the rich ground strangely come to birth,
Else two immaculate angels fallen on earth.
Lovers they knew they were, but why unclasped, unkissed?
Why should two lovers go frozen asunder in fear?
And yet they were, they were.

Over the shredding of an April blossom
Her thrilling fingers touched him quick with care;
Of many delicate postures she cast a snare;
But for all the red heart beating in the pale bosom,
Her face as of cunningly tinctured ivory
Was hard with an agony.

Stormed by the little batteries of an April night,
Passionate being the essence of the field,
Should the penetrable walls of the crumbling prison yield
And open her treasure to the first clamorous knight?
"This is the mad moon, and must I surrender all?
If he but ask it, I shall."

And gesturing largely to the very moon of Easter,
Mincing his steps, and swishing the jubilant grass,
And beheading some field-flowers that had come to pass,
He had reduced his tributaries faster,
Had not considerations pinched his heart
Unfitly for his art.

"Am I reeling with the sap of April like a drunkard?
Blessed is he that taketh this richest of cities;

But it is so stainless, the sack were a thousand pities;
This is that marble fortress not to be conquered,
Lest its white peace in the black flame turn to tinder
And an unutterable cinder."

They passed me once in April, in the mist.
No other season is it, when one walks and discovers
Two clad in the shapes of angels, being spectral lovers,
Trailing a glory of moon-gold and amethyst,
Who touch their quick fingers fluttering like a bird
Whose songs shall never be heard.

NECROLOGICAL

The friar had said his paternosters duly
And scourged his limps, and afterwards would have slept;
But with much riddling his head became unruly,
He arose, from the quiet monastery he crept.

Dawn lightened the place where the battle had been won,
The people were dead—it is easy, he thought, to die—
These dead remained, but the living all were gone,
Gone with the wailing trumps of victory.

The dead men wore no raiment against the air,
Bartholomew's men had spoiled them where they fell;
In defeat the heroes' bosoms were whitely bare,
The field was white like meads of asphodel.

Not all were white; some gory and fabulous
Whom the sword had pierced and then the grey wolf eaten;
But the brother reasoned that heroes' flesh was thus,
Flesh fails, and the postured bones lie weather-beaten.

The lords of chivalry were prone and shattered,
The gentle and the bodyguard of yeomen;
Bartholomew's stroke went home—but little it mattered,
Bartholomew went to be stricken of other foemen.

Beneath the blue ogive of the firmament
Was a dead warrior, clutching whose mighty knees
Was a leman, who with her flame had warmed his tent,
For him enduring all men's pleasantries.

Close by the sable stream that purged the plain
Lay the white stallion and his rider thrown.
The great beast had spilled there his little brain,
And the little groin of the knight was spilled by a stone.

The youth possessed him then of a crooked blade
Deep in the belly of a lugubrious knight;
He fingered it well, and it was cunningly made;
But strange apparatus was it for a Carmalite.

Then he sat upon a hill and hung his head,
Riddling, riddling, and lost in a vast surmise,
And so still that he likened himself unto those dead
Whom the kites of Heaven solicited with sweet cries.

DONALD DAVIDSON (B.A.'17, M.A.'22)

Lee in the Mountains
1865-1870

Walking into the shadows, walking alone
Where the sun falls through the ruined boughs of locusts
Up to the president's office. . . .
Hearing the voices
Whisper, *Hush, it is General Lee!* And strangely
Hearing my own voice say, *Good morning, boys.*
(Don't get up. You are early. It is long
Before the bell. You will have long to wait
On these cold steps. . . .)

The young have time to wait.
But soldiers' faces under their tossing flags
Lift no more by any road or field,
And I am spent with old wars and new sorrow.
Walking the rocky path, where steps decay
And the paint cracks and grass eats on the stone.
It is not General Lee, young men . . .
It is Robert Lee in a dark civilian suit who walks,
An outlaw fumbling for the latch, a voice
Commanding in a dream where no flag flies.

My father's house is taken and his hearth
Left to the candle-drippings where the ashes
Whirl at a chimney-breath on the cold stone.
I can hardly remember my father's look, I cannot
Answer his voice as he calls farewell in the misty
Mounting where riders gather at gates.
He was old then—I was a child—his hand
Held out for mine, some daybreak snatched away,

And he rode out, a broken man. Now let
His lone grave keep, surer than cypress roots,
The vow I made beside him. God too late
Unseals to certain eyes the drift
Of time and the hopes of men and a sacred cause.
The fortune of the Lees goes with the land
Whose sons will keep it still. My mother
Told me much. She sat among the candles,
Fingering the *Memoirs,* now so long unread.
And as my pen moves on across the page
Her voice comes back, a murmuring distillation
Of old Virginia times now faint and gone,
The hurt of all that was and cannot be.

Why did my father write? I know he saw
History clutched as a wraith out of blowing mist
Where the tongues are loud, and a glut of little souls
Laps at the too much blood and the burning house.
He would have his say, but I shall not have mine.
What I do is only a son's devoir
To a lost father. Let him only speak.
The rest must pass to men who never knew
(But on a written page) the strike of armies,
And never heard the long Confederate cry
Charge through the muzzling smoke or saw the bright
Eyes of the beardless boys go up to death.
It is Robert Lee who writes with his father's hand—
The rest must go unsaid and the lips be locked.

If all were told, as it cannot be told—
If all the dread opinion of the heart
Now could speak, now in the shame and torment
Lashing the bound and trampled States—

If a word were said, as it cannot be said—

I see clear waters run in Virginia's Valley
And in the house the weeping of young women
Rises no more. The waves of grain begin.
The Shenandoah is golden with new grain.
The Blue Ridge, crowned with a haze of light,
Thunders no more. The horse is at plough. The rifle



Returns to the chimney crotch and the hunter's hand.
And nothing else than this? Was it for this
That on an April day we stacked our arms
Obedient to a soldier's trust? To lie
Ground by heels of little men,
Forever maimed, defeated, lost, impugned?
And was I then betrayed? Did I betray?

If it were said, as still it might be said—
If it were said, and a word should run like fire,
Like living fire into the roots of grass,
The sunken flag would kindle on wild hills,
The brooding hearts would waken, and the dream
Stir like a crippled phantom under the pines,

And this torn earth would quicken into shouting
Beneath the feet of ragged bands—
The pen
Turns to the waiting page, the sword
Bows to the rust that cankers and the silence.

Among these boys whose eyes lift up to mine
Within gray walls where droning wasps repeat
A hollow reveille, I still must face,
Day after day, the courier with his summons
Once more to surrender, now to surrender all.
Without arms or men I stand, but with knowledge only
I face what long I saw, before others knew,
When Pickett's men streamed back, and I heard the tangled
Cry of the Wilderness wounded, bloody with doom.

The mountains, once I said, in the little room
At Richmond, by the huddled fire, but still
The President shook his head. The mountains wait,
I said, in the long beat and rattle of siege
At cratered Petersburg. Too late
We sought the mountains and those people came.
And Lee is in mountains now, beyond Appomattox,
Listening long for voices that never will speak
Again; hearing the hoofbeats come and go and fade
Without a stop, without a brown hand lifting
The tent-flap, or a bugle call at dawn,
Or ever on the long white road the flag
Of Jackson's quick brigades. I am alone,
Trapped, consenting, taken at last in mountains.

It is not the bugle now, or the long roll beating.
The simple stroke of a chapel bell forbids
The hurtling dream, recalls the lonely mind.
Young men, the God of your fathers is a just

And merciful God Who in this blood once shed
On your green altars measures out all days,
And measures out the grace
Whereby alone we live;
And in His might He waits,
Brooding within the certitude of time,
To bring this lost forsaken valor
And the fierce faith undying
And the love quenchless
To flower among the hills to which we cleave,
To fruit upon the mountains wither we flee,
Never forsaking, never denying
His children and His children's children forever
Unto all generations of the faithful heart.

ON A REPLICA OF THE PARTHENON AT NASHVILLE

Why do they come? What do they seek
Who build but never read their Greek?
The classic stillness of a pool
Beleaguered in its certitude
By aimless motors that can make
Only incertainty more sure;
And where the willows crowd the pure
Expanse of clouds and blue that stood
Around the gables Athens wrought,
Shop-girls embrace a plaster thought,
And eye Poseidon's loins ungirt,
And never heed the brandished spear
Or feel the bright-eyed maiden's rage
Whose gaze the sparrow violate;
But the sky drips its spectral dirt,
And gods, like men, to soot revert.
Gone is the mild, the serene air.
The golden years are come too late.
Pursue not wisdom or virtue here,
But what blind motion, what dim last
Regret of men who slew their past
Raised up this bribe against their fate.

TWILIGHT ON UNION STREET

In the cool of morning Andrew Jackson came,
A young man riding on a horse of flame,
Tossed the reins to a black boy, and strode
High-booted and quick-oathed to court and code.

Of a sultry noontime General Jackson stalked,
A grimness that put silence where men talked.
The fluttering of the gossips thinned and fled;
They knew where General Jackson left his dead.

And now the twilight. History grows dim.
The traffic leads, we no more follow him;
In bronze he rides, saluting James K. Polk,
His horse's rump turned to us in the smoke.

SANCTUARY

You must remember this when I am gone,
And tell your sons—for you will have tall sons,
And times will come when answers will not wait.
Remember this: if ever defeat is black
Upon your eyelids, go to the wilderness
In the dread last of trouble, for your foe
Tangles there, more than you, and paths are strange
To him, that are your paths, in the wilderness,
And were your fathers' paths, and once were mine.

You must remember this, and mark it well
As I have told it—what my eyes have seen
And where my feet have walked beyond forgetting.
But tell it not often, tell it only at last
When your sons know what blood runs in their veins.
And when the danger comes, as come it will,
Go as your fathers went with woodsman's eyes
Uncursed, unflinching, studying only the path.

First, what you cannot carry, burn or hide.
Leave nothing here for *him* to take or eat.
Bury, perhaps, what you can surely find
If good chance ever bring you back again.
Level the crops. Take only what you need:
A little corn for an ash-cake, a little
Side-meat for your three days' wilderness ride.
Horses for your women and your children,
And one to lead, if you should have that many.
Then go. At once. Do not wait until
You see *his* great dust rising in the valley.
Then it will be too late.

Go when you hear that he has crossed Will's Ford.
Others will know and pass the word to you—
A tap on the blinds, a hoot-owl's cry at dusk.

Do not look back. You can see your roof afire
When you reach high ground. Yet do not look.
Do not turn. Do not look back.
Go further on. Go high. Go deep.

The line of this rail-fence east across the old-fields
Leads to the cane-bottoms. Back of that,
A white-oak tree beside a spring, the one
Chopped with three blazes on the hillward side.
There pick up the trail. I think it was
A buffalo path once or an Indian road.
You follow it three days along the ridge
Until you reach the spruce woods. Then a cliff
Breaks, where the trees are thickest, and you look
Into a cove, and right across, Chilhowee
Is suddenly there, and you are home at last.
Sweet springs of mountain water in that cove
Run always. Deer and wild turkey range.
Your kin, knowing the way, long there before you
Will have good fires and kettles on to boil,
Bough-shelters reared and thick beds of balsam.
There in tall timber you will be as free
As were your fathers once when Tryon raged
In Carolina hunting Regulators,
Or Tarleton rode to hang the old-time Whigs.
Some tell how in that valley young Sam Houston
Lived long ago with his brother, Oo-loo-te-ka,
Reading Homer among the Cherokee;
And others say a Spaniard may have found it
Far from De Soto's wandering turned aside,
And left his legend on a boulder there.
And some that this was a sacred place to all

Old Indian tribes before the Cherokee
Came to our eastern mountains. Men have found
Images carved in bird-shapes there and faces
Moulded into the great kind look of gods.
These old tales are like prayers. I only know
This is the secret refuge of our race
Told only from a father to his son,
A trust laid on your lips, as though a vow
To generations past and yet to come.
There, from the bluffs above, you may at last
Look back to all you left, and trace
His dust and flame, and plan your harrying
If you would gnaw his ravaging flank, or smite
Him in his glut among the smouldering ricks.
Or else, forgetting ruin, you may lie
On sweet grass by a mountain stream, to watch
The last wild eagle soar or the last raven
Cherish his brood within their rocky nest,
Or see, when mountain shadows first grow long,
The last enchanted white deer come to drink.



ROBERT PENN WARREN (B.A.'25)

Terror

"I Volontari Americani Presso Eserciti Stranieri Non Perdono La Cittadinanza." Il Messaggero, *Roma, Sabato, 27 Gennaio, 1940*

Not picnics or pageants or the improbable
Powers of air whose tongues exclaim dominion
And gull the great man to follow his terrible
Star, suffice; not the window-box, or the bird on
The ledge, which mean so much to the invalid,
Nor the joy you leaned after, as by the tracks the grass
In the emptiness after the lighted Pullmans fled,
Suffices; nor faces, which, like distraction, pass

Under the street-lamps, teasing to faith or pleasure,
Suffice you, born to no adequate definition of terror.
For yours, like a puppy, is darling and inept,
Though his cold nose brush your hand while you laugh at his clowning;
Or the kitten you sleep with, though once or twice while you slept
It tried to suck your breath, and you dreamed of drowning,
Perjured like Clarence; sluiced from the perilous hatches;
But never of lunar wolf-waste or the arboreal
Malignancy, with the privy breath, which watches
And humps in the dark; but only a dream, after all.
At the worst, you think, with a little twinge of distress,
That contagion may nook in the comforting fur you love to caress.

Though some, unsatisfied and sick, have brought
That immitigable face, whose smile is ice,
And fired their hearts like pitch-pine, for they thought
Better flame than the damp worm-tooth of compromise:

So Harry L. I knew, whose whores and gin
Had dwindled to a slick smile in the drug store
But for the absurd contraption of a plane,
Which flung on air the unformulable endeavor
While heart bled to lave the applauded name.
The crash was in an old cornfield; not even flame.

So some, whose passionate emptiness and tidal
Lust swayed toward the debris of Madrid,
And left New York to loll in their fierce idyll
Among the olives, where the snipers hid;
And now the North, to see that visioned face
And polarize their iron of despair,
Who praise no beauty like the boreal grace
Which greens the dead eye under the rocket's flare.
They fight old friends, for their obsession knows
Only the immaculate itch, not human friends or foes.

They sought a secret which, perhaps, the Moor,
Hieratic, white-robed, pitiless, might teach,
Who duped and dying but for pride, therefore
Hugged truth which cause or conscience scarcely reach.
As Jacob all night with the angelic foe,
They wrestle now, by frozen fen and floe,
New Courier, in fury sanctified;
And seek that face which, greasy, frost-breathed, in furs,
Bends to the bomb-sight over bitter Helsingfors.

Blood splashed on the terrorless intellect creates
Corrosive fizzle like the splattered lime,
And its enseamed stew but satiates
Itself, in that lewd and faceless pantomime.
You know, by radio, how hotly the world repeats,
When the brute crowd roars or the blunt boot-heels resound
In the Piazza or the Wilhelmplatz,

The crime of Onan, spilled upon the ground;
You know, whose dear hope Alexis Carrel kept
Alive in a test tube, where it monstrously grew, and slept.

But it is dead, and you now, guiltless, sink
To rest in lobbies, or pace gardens where
The slow god crumbles and the fountains prink,
Nor heed the criminal king, who paints the air
With discoursed madness and protruding eye,
Nor give the alarm, nor ask tonight where sleeps
That head which hooped the jewel Fidelity,
But like an old melon now, in the dank ditch, seeps;
But you crack nuts, while the conscience-stricken stare
Kisses the terror; for you see an empty chair.

PURSUIT

The hunchback on the corner, with gum and shoelaces,
Has his own wisdom and pleasures, and may not be lured
To divulge them to you, for he has merely endured
Your appeal for his sympathy and your kind purchases;
And wears infirmity but as the general who turns
Apart, in his famous old greatcoat there on the hill
At dusk when the rapture and cannonade are still,
To muse withdrawn from the dead, from his gorgeous subalterns;
Or stares from the thicket of his familiar pain, like a fawn
That meets you a moment, wheels, in imperious innocence is gone.

Go to the clinic. Wait in the outer room,
Where like an old possum the snag-nailed hand will hump
On its knee in murderous patience, and the pomp
Of pain swells like the Indies, or a plum.
And there you will stand, as on the Roman hill,
Stunned by each withdrawn gaze and severe shape,
The first barbarian victor stood to gape
At the sacrificial fathers, white-robed, still;
And even the feverish old Jew regards you with authority
Till you fell like one who has come too late, or improperly clothed,
to a party.

The doctor will take you now. He is burly and clean;
Listening, like lover or worshiper, bends at your heart;
But cannot make out just what is tries to impart;
So smiles; says you simply need a change of scene.
Of scene, of solace: Therefore Florida,
Where Ponce de Leon clanked among the lilies,
Where white sails skit on blue and cavort like fillies,
And the shoulder gleams in the moonlight corridor.

A change of love: if love is a groping Godward, though blind,
No matter what crevice, cranny, chink, bright in dark, the pale
tentacle find.

In Florida consider the flamingo,
Its color passion but its neck a question;
Consider even that girl the other guests shun
On beach at bar, in bed, for she may know
The secret you are seeking, after all;
Or the child you humbly sit by, excited and curly,
That screams on the shore at the sea's sunlit hurlyburly.
Till the mother calls its name, toward nightfall.
Till you sit alone: in the dire meridians, off Ireland, in fury
Of spume-tooth and dawnless sea-heave, salt rimes the lookout's
devout eye.

Till you sit alone—which is the beginning of error—
Behind you the music and lights of the great hotel:
Solution, perhaps, is public, despair personal,
But history held to your breath clouds like a mirror.
There are many states, and towns in them, and faces,
But meanwhile, the little old lady in black, by the wall,
Who admires all the dancers, and tells you how just last fall
Her husband died in Ohio, and damp mists her glasses;
She blinks and croaks, like a toad or a Norn, in the horrible light,
And rattles her crutch, which may put forth a small bloom, perhaps
white.

ORIGINAL SIN: A SHORT STORY

Nodding, its great head rattling like a gourd,
And locks like seaweed strung on the stinking stone,
The nightmare stumbles past, and you have heard
It fumble your door before it whimpers and is gone:

It acts like the old hound that used to snuffle your door and moan.
You thought you had lost it when you left Omaha,
For it seemed connected then with your grandpa, who
Had a wen on his forehead and sat on the veranda
To finger the precious protuberance, as was his habit to do,
Which glinted in sun like rough garnet or the rich old brain bulging
through.

But you met it in Harvard Yard as the historic steeple
Was confirming the midnight with its hideous racket,
And you wondered how it had come, for it stood so imbecile,
With empty hands, humble, and surely nothing in pocket:
Riding the rods, perhaps—or grandpa's will paid the ticket.

You were almost kindly then, in your first homesickness,
As it tortured its still face to speak, but scarcely mewed;
Since then you have outlived all your homesickness,
But have met it in many another distempered latitude:
Oh, nothing is lost, ever lost! at last you understood.

But it never came in the quantum glare of sun
To shame you before your friends, and had nothing to do
With your public experience or private reformation:
But it thought no bed too narrow—it stood with lips askew
And shook its great head sadly like the abstract Jew.

Never met you in the lyric arsenical meadows
When children call and your heart goes stone in the bosom;
At the orchard anguish never, nor ovoid horrow,
Which is furred like a peach or avid like the delicious plum.
It takes no part in your classic prudence or fondled axiom.

Not there when you exclaimed: "Hope is betrayed by
Disastrous glory of sea-capes, sun-torment of whitecaps
—There must be a new innocence for us to be stayed by."
But there it stood, after all the timetables, all the maps,
In the crepuscular clatter of *always, always, or perhaps.*

You have moved often and rarely left an address,
And hear of the deaths of friends with sly pleasure,
A sense of cleansing and hope, which blooms from distress;
But it has not died, it comes, its hand childish, unsure,
Clutching the bribe of chocolate or a toy you used to treasure.

It tries the lock; you hear, but simply drowse:
There is nothing remarkable in that sound at the door.
Later you may hear it wander the dark house
Like a mother who rises at night to seek a childhood picture;
Or it goes to the backyard and stands like an old horse cold in the
pasture.

THE BALLAD OF BILLIE POTTS

(When I was a child I heard this story from an old lady who was a relative of mine. The scene, according to her version, was in the section of Western Kentucky known as "Between the Rivers," the region between the Cumberland and the Tennessee. Years later, I came across another version in a book on the history of the outlaws of the Cave Inn Rock, or the Cave-In-Rock. The name of Bardstown in the present account refers to Bardstown, Kentucky, where the first race track west of the mountains was laid out late in the eighteenth century.)

Big Billie Potts was big and stout
In the land between the rivers.
His shoulders were wide and his gut stuck out
Like a croker of nubbins and his holler and shout
Made the bob-cat shiver and the black-jack leaves shake
In the section between the rivers.
He would slap you on your back and laugh.

Big Billie had a wife, she was dark and little
In the land between the rivers,
And clever with her wheel and clever with her kettle,
But she never said a word and when she sat
By the fire here eyes worked slow and narrow like a cat
In the land between the rivers.
Nobody knew what was in her head.

They had a big boy with fuzz on his chin
So tall he ducked the door when he came in,
In the land between the rivers,
A clabber-headed bastard with snot in his nose
And big red wrists hanging out of his clothes
And a whicker when he laughed where his father had a beller
In the section between the rivers.

They called him Little Billie.
He was their darling.

(It is not hard to see the land, what it was.
Low hills, and oak. The fetid bottoms where
The slough uncoiled and in the tangled cane,
Where no sun comes, the muskrat's astute face
Was lifted to the yammering jay; then dropped.



Some cabin where the shag-bark stood and the
Magnificent tulip-tree; both now are gone.
But the land is there, and as you top a rise,
Beyond you all the landscape steams and simmers
—The hills, now gutted, red, cane-brake and black-jack yet.
The oak leaf steams under the powerful sun.
"Mister, is this the right road to Paducah?"
The red face, seamed and gutted like the hill,
Slow under time, and with the innocent savagery
Of Time, the bleared eyes rolling, answers from
Your dream: "They names hit so, but I ain't bin.")

Big Billie was the kind who laughed but could spy
The place for a ferry where folks would come by
In the land between the rivers.
He built an inn and folks bound West
Hitched their horses there to take their rest
And grease the gall and grease the belly
And jaw and spit under the trees
In the section between the rivers.
Big Billie said: "Git down, friend, and take yore ease!"
He would slap you on your back and set you at his table.

(Leaning and slow, you see them move
In massive passion colder than any love:
Their lips move but you do not hear the words
Nor trodden twig nor fluted irony of birds
Nor hear the rustle of the heart
That, heave and settle, gasp and start,
Heaves like a fish in the ribs' dark basket borne
West from the great water's depth whence it was torn.

Their names are like the leaves, but are forgot
—The slush and swill of the world's great pot
That foamed at the range's lip, and spilled
Like quicksilver across green baize, the unfulfilled
Disparate glitter, gleam, wild symptom, seed
Flung in the long wind: silent, proceed
Past meadow, salt-lick, and the lyric swale;
Enter the arbor, shadow of trees, fade, fail.)

Big Billie was sharp at swap and trade
And could smell the nest where the egg was laid,
He could read and cipher and they called him squire
In the land between the rivers.
And he added up his money while he sat by the fire
And sat in the shade while folks sweated and strove,

For he was the one who fatted and throve,
In the section between the rivers.
"Thank you kindly, sir," Big Billie would say
When the man in the black coat paid him at streak of day
And swung to the saddle and was ready to go
And rode away and didn't know
That he was already as good as dead
In the section between the rivers.
For at midnight the message had been sent ahead:
"Man in black coat, riding bay mare with star."

(There was a beginning but you cannot see it.
There will be an end but you cannot see it.
They will not turn their faces to you though you call,
Who pace a logic merciless as light,
Whose law is their long shadow on the grass,
Sun at the back; pace, pass,
And passing nod in that glacial delirium
While the tight sky shudders like a drum
And speculation rasps its idiot nails
Across the dry slate where you did the sum.

The answer is in the back of the book but the page is gone.
And grandma told you to tell the truth but she is dead.
And heedless, their hairy faces fixed
Beyond your call or question now, they move
Under the infatuate weight of their wisdom,
Precious but for the preciousness of their burden,
Sainted and sad and sage as the hairy ass, who bear
History like bound faggots, with stiff knees;
And breathe the immaculate climate where
The lucent leaf is lifted, lank beard fingered, by no breeze,
Rapt in the fabulous complacency of fresco, vase, or frieze:)

Little Billie was full of steam and vinegar
And full of sap as a maple tree
And full of tricks as a lop-eared pup,
In the land between the rivers.
So one night when the runner didn't show up,
Big Billie called Little and said, "Saddle up,"
And nodded toward the man who was taking his sup
With his belt unlatched and his feet to the fire.
Big Billie said, "Give Amos a try,
Fer this feller takes the South Fork and Amos'll be nighe
Than Baldy or Buster, and Amos is sly
And slick as a varmint, and I don't deny
I lak bizness with Amos fer he's one you kin trust
In the section between the rivers,
And hit looks lak they's mighty few.
Amos will split up fair and square."

Little Billie had something in his clabber-head
In addition to snot, and he reckoned he knew
How to skin a cat or add two and two.
So long before the sky got red
Over the land between the rivers,
He hobbled his horse back in the swamp
And squatted on his hams in the morning dew and damp
And scratched his stomach and grinned to think
How his Pap would be proud and his Mammy glad
To know what a thriving boy they had
In the section between the rivers.
He always was a good boy to his darling Mammy.

(Think of yourself riding away from the dawn,
Think of yourself and the unnamed ones who had gone
Before, riding, who rode away from *goodbye, goodbye,*
And toward *hello,* toward Time's unwinking eye;
And like the cicada had left, at cross-roads or square,

The old shell of self, thin, ghostly, translucent, light as air;
At dawn riding into the curtain of unwhispering green,
Away from the vigils and voices into the green
World, land of the innocent bough, land of the leaf.
Think of your face green in the submarine light of the leaf.

Or think of yourself couched at the swamp-edge,
Dawn-silence past last owl-hoot and not yet at day-verge
First bird-stir, titmouse or drowsy warbler not yet.
You touch the grass in the dark and your hand is wet.
Then light: you wait for the stranger's hoofs on the soft trace,
And under the green leaf's translucence the light bathes your face.

Think of yourself at dawn: Which are you? What?)

Little Billie heard hoofs on the soft grass,
But he squatted and let the rider pass,
For he didn't want to waste good lead and powder
Just to make the slough-fish and swamp-buzzard prouder
In the land between the rivers.
But he saw the feller's face and thanked his luck
It was the one Pap said was fit to pluck.
So he got on his horse and cantered up the trace.
Called, "Hi thar!" and the stranger watched him coming,
And sat his mare with a smile on his face,
Just watching Little Billie and smiling and humming
In the section between the rivers.
Little Billie rode up and the stranger said,
"Why bless my heart, if it ain't Little Billie!"

"Good mornen," said Billie, and said, "My Pap
Found somethin you left and knowed you'd be missen,
And he ain't wanten nuthin not proper his'n."
But the stranger didn't do a thing but smile and listen
Polite as could be to what Billie said:
But he must have had eyes in the side of his head

As they rode along beside the slough
In the land between the rivers,
Or known what Billie was out to do,
For when Billie said, "Mister, I've brung hit to you,"
And reached his hand for it down in his britches,
The stranger just reached his own hand, too.

"Boom!" Billie's gun said, and the derringer, "Bang!"
"Oh, I'm shot!" Billie howled and grabbed his shoulder.
"Nor bad," said the stranger, "for you're born to hang,
But I'll save some rope 'fore your're a minute older
If you don't high-tail to your honest Pap
In the section between the rivers."
Oh, Billie didn't tarry and Billie didn't linger,
For Billie didn't trust the stranger's finger
And didn't admire the stranger's face
And didn't like the climate of the place,
So he turned and high-tailed up the trace,
With blood on his shirt and snot in his nose
And the stranger just sits and admires how he goes
In the section between the rivers,
And says, "Why, that boy would do right well back on the Bardstown track!"

"You fool!" said his Pap, but his Mammy cried
To see the place where the gore-blood dried
Round the little hole in her darling's hide.
She wiped his nose and patted his head,
But Pappy barred the door and Pappy said,
"That bastard has maybe got some friends
In the section between the rivers,
And you can't say how sich bizness ends
And a man ain't sure he kin trust his neighbors,
For thar's a mortal spite fer him sweats and labors
Even here between the rivers."

He didn't ask Little how he felt,
But said, "Two hundred in gold's in my money belt,
And take the roan and the brand-new saddle
And stop youre blubberen and skeedaddle,
And the next time you try and pull a trick
Fer God's sake don't talk but do hit quick."
So little Billie took his leave
And left his Mammy there to grieve
And left his Pappy in Old Kaintuck
And headed West to try his luck



And left the land between the rivers,
For it was Roll, Missouri,
It was Roll, roll, Missouri.
And he was gone nigh ten long year
And never sent word to give his Pappy cheer
Nor wet pen in ink for his Mammy dear.
For Little Billie never was much of a hand with pen-staff.
(There is always another country and always another place.
There is always another name and another face.
And the name and the face are you, and you

The name and the face, and the stream you gaze into
Will show the adoring face, show the lips that lift to you
As you lean with the implacable thirst of self,
As you lean to the image which is yourself,
To set the lip to lip, fix eye on bulging eye,
To drink not of the stream but of your deep identity.
But water is water and it flows,
Under the image on the water the water coils and goes
And its own beginning and its end only the water knows.
There are many countries and the rivers in them
—Cumberland, Tennessee, Ohio, Colorado, Pecos, Little Big Horn,
And Roll, Missouri, roll.
But there is only water in them.

And in the new country and in the new place
The eyes of the new friend will reflect the new face
And his mouth will speak to frame
The syllables of the new name
And the name is you and is the agitation of the air
And is the wind and the wind runs and the wind is everywhere.

The name and the face are you.
The name and the face are always new
And they are you.
Are new.

For they have been dipped in the healing flood.
For they have been dipped in the redeeming blood.
For they have been dipped in Time
And Time is only beginnings
Time is only and always beginnings
And is the redemption of our crime
And is our Saviour's priceless blood.

For Time is always the new place,
And no-place.

For Time is always the new name and the new face,
And no-name and no-face.

For Time is motion
For Time is innocence
For Time is West.)

Oh, who is coming along the trace,
Whistling along in the late sunshine,
With a big black hat above his big red face
And a long black coat that swings so fine?
Oh, who is riding along the trace
Back to the land between the rivers,
With a big black beard growing down to his guts
And silver mountings on his pistol-butts
And a belt as broad as a saddle-girth
And a look in his eyes like he owned the earth?
And meets a man riding up the trace
And looks right sharp and scans his face
And says, "Durn if'n hit ain't Joe Drew!"
"I reckin hit's me," says Joe and gives a spit,
"But whupped if'n I figger how you knows hit,
Fer if'n I'm Joe, then who air you?"
And the man with the black beard says: "Why, I'm Little Billie!"
And Joe Drew says: "Wal, I'll be whupped."

"Be whupped," Joe said, "and whar you goen?"
"Oh, I'm just visiten back whar I done my growen
In the section between the rivers,
Fer I bin out West and taken my share
And I reckin my luck helt out fer fair,
So I done come home," Little Billie said,
"To see my folks if'n they ain't dead."
"Ain't dead," Joe answered, and shook his head,
"But that's the best a man kin say,
Fer it looked lak when you went away

You taken West your Pappy's luck
And maybe now you kin bring hit back
To the section between the rivers."
Little Billie laughed and jangled his pockets and said: "Ain't nuthen wrong with my luck."

And said: "Wal, I'll be gitten on home
But after yore supper why don't you come
And we'll open a jug and you tell me the news
In the section between the rivers.
But not too early fer hit's my aim
To git me some fun 'fore they know my name,
And tease 'em and fun 'em fer you never guessed
I was Little Billie what went out West."
And Joe Drew said: "Durn if'n you always wuzn't a hand to git yore fun."

(Over the plain, over mountain and river, drawn,
Wanderer with slit-eyes adjusted to distance,
Drawn out of distance, drawn from the great plateau
Where the sky heeled in the unsagging wind and the cheek burned,
Who stood beneath the white peak that glimmered like a dream,
And spat, and it was morning and it was morning.
You lay among the wild plums and the kildees cried.
You lay in the thicket under the new leaves and the kildees cried,
For all your luck, for all the astuteness of your heart,
And would not stop and would not stop
And the clock ticked all night long in the furnished room
And would not stop
And the *El*-train passed on the quarters with a whish like a terrible broom
And would not stop
And there is always the sound of breathing in the next room
And it will not stop
And the waitress says, "Will that be all sir, will that be all?"

And will not stop
And the valet says, "Will that be all, sir, will that be all?"
And will not stop
For nothing is ever all and nothing is ever all,
For all your experience and your expertness of human vices and of valor
At the hour when the ways are darkened.

Though your luck held and the market was always satisfactory,
Though the letter always came and your lovers were always true,
Though you always received the respect due to your position,
Though your hand never failed of its cunning and your glands always thoroughly knew their business,
Though your conscience was easy and you were assured of your innocence,
You became gradually aware that something was missing from the picture,
And upon closer inspection exclaimed: "Why, I'm not in it at all!"
Which was perfectly true.

Therefore you tried to remember when you had last had whatever it was you had lost,
But it was a long time back.
And you decided to retrace your steps from that point,
But it was a long way back.
It was, nevertheless, absolutely essential to make the effort,
And since you had never been a man to be deterred by difficult circumstances,
You came back.
For there is no place like home.)

He joked them and he teased them and he had his fun
And they never guessed that he was the one
Had been Mammy's darling and Pappy's joy
When he was a great big whickering boy

In the land between the rivers,
And he jingled his pockets and he took his sop
And patted his belly which was full nigh to pop
And wiped the buttermilk out of his beard
And took his belch and up he reared
Back from the table and cocked his chair
And said: "Old man, ain't you got any fresh drinken water, this here ain't fresherer'n a hoss-puddle?"
And the old woman said: "Pappy, why don't you take the young gentleman down to the spring so he kin git hit good and fresh?"
And the old woman gave the old man a straight look.
She gave him the bucket, but it was not empty, but it was not water.

Oh, the stars are shining and the meadow is bright
But under the trees is dark and night
In the land between the rivers.
Oh, on the trace the fireflies spark
But under the trees is night and dark,
And way off yonder is the whippoorwill
And the owl off yonder hoots on the hill
But under the trees is dark and still
In the section between the rivers.
And the leaves hang down in the dark of the trees
And there is the spring in the dark of the trees
And there is the spring as black as ink
And one star in it caught through a chink
Of the leaves that hang down in the dark of the trees,
And the star is there but it does not wink.
And Little Billie gets down on his knees
And props his hands in the same old place
To sup the water at his ease;
And the star is gone but there is his face.
"Just help yoreself," Big Billie said;
Then set the hatchet in his head.

They went through his pockets and they buried him in the dark of
the trees.
"I figgered he was a ripe 'un," the old man said.
"Yeah, but you wouldn't done nuthen hadn't bin fer me," the old
woman said.

(The reflection is shadowy and the form not clear,
For the hour is late, is late, and scarcely a glimmer comes here
Under the leaf, the bough, in its innocence dark;
And under your straining face you can scarcely mark
The darkling gleam of your face little less than the water dark.

But perhaps what you lost was lost in the pool long ago
When childlike you lost it and then in your innocence rose to go
After kneeling, as now, with your thirst beneath the leaves:
And years it lies here and dreams in the depth and grieves,
More faithful than mother or father in the light or dark of the
leaves.
But after, after the irrefutable modes and marches,
After waters that never quench the thirst in the throat that parches,
After the sleep that sieves the long day's dubieties
And the cricket's corrosive wisdom under the trees,
After the rumor of wind and the bright anonymities,

You come, weary of greetings and the new friend's smile,
Weary in art of the stranger, worn with your wanderer's wile,
Weary of innocence and the husks of Time,
Prodigal, back to the homeland of no-Time,
To ask forgiveness and the patrimony of your crime;

And kneel in the untutored night as to demand
What gift—Oh, father, father—from that dissevering hand?)

"And whar's Little Billie?" Joe Drew said.
"Air you crazy," said Big, "and plum outa yore head,
Fer you knows he went West nigh ten long year?"
"Went West," Joe said, "but I seen him here

In the section between the rivers,
Riden up the trace as big as you please
With a long black coat comen down to his knees
And a big black beard comen down to his guts
And silver mountens on his pistol-butts.
And he said out West how he done struck
It rich and wuz bringen back yore luck
To the land between the rivers."
"I shore-God could use some luck," Big Billie said,
But his woman wet her lips and craned her head
And said: "Come riden with a big black beard, you say?"
And Joe: "Oh, hit wuz Billie as big as day."
And the old man's eyes bugged out of a sudden and he croaked like a sick bull-frog and said: "Come riden with a long black coat?"

Oh, the night is still and the grease-lamp low
And the old man's breath comes wheeze and slow.
Oh, the blue flame sucks on the old rag wick
And the old woman's breath comes sharp and quick,
And there isn't a sound under the roof
But her breath's hiss and his breath's puff,
And there isn't a sound outside the door
As they hearken but cannot hear any more
The creak of the saddle or the plop of the hoof,
For a long time now Joe Drew's been gone
And left them sitting there alone
While the dark outside gets big and still,
For the owl doesn't hoot off there on the hill
Any more and is quiet, and the whippoorwill
Is quiet in the dark of the trees and still
In the land between the rivers.
And so they sit and breathe and wait
And breathe while the night gets big and late,
And neither of them gives move or stir

And she won't look at him and he won't look at her.
He doesn't look at her but he says: "Git me the spade."
She grabbled with her hands and he dug with the spade
Where the leaves let down the dark and shade
In the land between the rivers.
She grabbled like a dog in the hole they made,
But stopped of a sudden and then she said,
"I kin put my hand on his face."
They light up a pine-knot and lean at the place
Where the man in the black coat slumbers and lies
With trash in his beard and dirt on his face;
And the torch-flame shines in his wide-open eyes.
Down the old man leans with the flickering flame
And moves his lips, says: "Tell me his name."
"Ain't Billie, ain't Billie," the old woman cries,
"Oh, hit ain't my Billie, fer he wuz little
And helt to my skirt while I stirred the kittle
And called me Mammy and hugged me tight
And come in the house when hit fell night."
But the old man leans down with the flickering flame
And croaks: "But tell me his name."
"Oh, he ain't got none, fer he just come riden
From some fer place whar he'd bin biden,
And ain't got a name and never had none,
But Billie, my Billie, he had one,
And hit wuz Billie, hit wuz his name."
But the old man croaked: "Tell me his name";
"Oh, he ain't got none and hit's all the same,
But Billie had one, and he wuz little
And offen his chin I would wipe the spittle
And wiped the drool and kissed him thar
And counted his toes and kissed him whar
The little black mark wuz under his tit,
Shaped lak a clover under his left tit,
With a shape fer luck and I'd kiss hit—"

And the old man blinks in the pine-knot flare
And his mouth comes open like a fish for air,
Then he says right low, "I had nigh fergot."
"Oh, I kissed him on his little luck-spot
And I kissed and he'd laff as lak as not—"
The old man said: "Git his shirt open."
The old woman opened the shirt and there was the birthmark under the left tit.
It was shaped for luck.

(The bee knows, and the eel's cold ganglia burn,
And the sad head lifting to the long return,
Through brumal deeps, in the great unsolsticed coil,
Carries its knowledge, nagivator without star,
And under the stars, pure in its clamorous toil,
The goose hoots north where the starlit marshes are.
The salmon heaves at the fall, and wanderer, you
Heave at the great fall of Time, and gorgeous, gleam
In the powerful arc, and anger and outrage like dew,
In your plunge, fling, and plunge to the thunderous stream:
Back to the silence, back to the pool, back
To the high pool, motionless, and the unmurmuring dream.
And you, wanderer, back,
Brother to pinion and the pious fin that cleave
Their innocence of air and the disinfectant flood
And wing and welter and weave
The long compulsion and the circuit hope
Back,
And bear through that limitless and devouring fluidity
The itch and humble promise which is home.
And you, wanderer, back,
For the beginning is death and the end may be life,
For the beginning was definition and the end may be definition,
And our innocence needs, perhaps, new definition,
And the wick needs the flame

But the flame needs the wick.
And the father waits for the son.
The hour is late,
The scene familiar even in shadow,
The transaction brief,
And you, wanderer, back,
After the striving and the wind's word,
To kneel
Here in the evening empty of wind or bird,
To kneel in the sacramental silence of evening
At the feet of the old man
Who is evil and ignorant and old,
To kneel
With the little black mark under your heart,
Which is your name,
Which is shaped for luck,
Which is your luck.)

RANDALL JARRELL (B.A.'35, M.A.'38)

The Head of Wisdom

(This poem is written for Katherine Louise Lyle Starr, who was born May 16, 1940. The head is Beethoven's.)

The little Will comes naked to its world
  Without a rag of wit;
Church, State, the crazy categories
  Crowd to the straw where it
Weeps under the family's fondling;

The shepherds baa, the Magi smell like camels,
  Hark, how Herod's agents sing!
No godmother comes giftless to the foundling:
  Child, is there anything
In your whole universe to spare you

Its witless and officious blessing?
  "Do, do," your mother nags,
Your father gives his senseless laugh, or mutters
  His sour hits while he wags
A dry head at each new day's errors;

State sets a rifle in that aimless hand;
  The manufacturers
Bid for the labors of its fruitless years;
  "Obey, or hell is yours,"
Church tells; and your Hell's apologists—

King, priest, philosopher, the lean professors—
  Tell, tell, and tell. You see.
Learn it all—the lies, the hunger, and the blood:
  The peoples' history;
What we said; and all that we knew instead;

Learn it; but wisdom is more than knowing
  What we knew, what we said,
The famous errors of the famous dead.
  The maned and erring head
Holds, under the truth, under the lies,

Something stronger than either; the great stare
  Of the magnificent eyes
Dazzles, is dazzled with more than tears;
  No surprise
Warms the ruined face: the wilderness

Of confusion, of desolation, the helpless laughter
  Of the wise break free
From the mouth open in the dying face—
  Child, *here* is history,
Here is knowledge, is wisdom—see! see!

FOR AN EMIGRANT

I

In that bad year and city of your birth
They traded bread for bank notes weight for weight,
And nothing but the statues kept the smile
The waltzers wore once: excluding, innocent,
The face of old and comfortable injustice.
And if you wept,
Dropped red into a city where the husbandless
And fatherless were crying too, who cared
For one more cry or one more child? You grew;

Time put words into your mouth, and you put sugar
Upon your windowsill and waited for a brother—
The stork was greedy, ate, brought nothing in return.
And life was thinking of you, took you back to Prague;
At school there, timid, boisterous, you spoke
The unaccustomed Czech—
The children laughed at you. But you were learning
New worlds and a new life, the old
City and its new country too were learning
Man's strength: to be just; yes, to be free.

"I saw summer in my time." Summer is ending.
The storms plunge from the tree of winter, death
Moves like an impulse over Europe. Child,
What man is just or free?—but fortunate,
Warm in time's hand, turning and trusting to his face?
And that face changes.
Time is a man for men, and He is willing.
For many a new life, for others death. Already
He buys His trench-coat, falls, writes His big book;

Points here, points here: to Jews, the wicked friends—
His words are the moments of a man's life.
And now the men march. One morning you woke
And found Vienna gone, your father said:
"Us next!" And you were next.
Us next!
Cried map and mouth, oppressors and oppressed,
The appeasers as they gave your life—but you were gone.
"I had a tongue, a city." *What is your name?*
"My name is what my name was." *You have no name.*

So the dream spoke to you: in Zurich, Paris,
In London on a lawn; the unbefriending sea
Cried to you, "Stranger!"—superb, inhospitable,
The towers of the island turned their gaze
Past the girl who stared up to the great statue:
So green, so gay . . . .
That is how you came. Your face shows white
Against the dark time, your words are indistinct,
One cry among so many, lost in the great sound

Of degradation and agony, the peoples dying.
The net was laid for you; and you are free.
Free—to be homeless, to be friendless, to be nameless,
To stammer the hard words in the foreign night,
To remember; and free also, child,
To love and to be loved,
To see in one face the land, the tongue, the time—
Blind with your joy, to whisper: Happiness
Is possible and difficult: to learn at last
New words and a new country, a new love.

II

(In augmentation)

If I could only stop there—stop telling there,
Stop time there; fix those eyes upon their life,
The answerers and answered; fix in their light dream
The lips parting for their laugh, the grateful and faultless
And stupid laughter of the child, the joy of ignorance;
But you must wake, poor Beauty.
And here where Locke's page sparkled white as dew
The woman's face must come, to choose and suffer
And lose its beauty and at last find beautiful

Its death. . . . You escaped from nothing; the westering soul
Finds Europe waiting for it over every sea.
The statue in the harbor stretched its hand
Above you in His gesture, He is here
To turn on you in love or in denunciation
The eyes that are your own.
If they are evil, they are evil really,
As a child's are evil: blind in the unbearable
Magnificence of bronze; so absolute in their assurance
Of power and of innocence: the statue's eyes.

And what looks timidly from their clear depths
Is the child's loneliness, his passionate rejection
Of his own helplessness and pain, the man's
Denial of the knowledge he cannot endure.
The mouth says: "I made me, I shall last, be sure.
Time is my will.
Surely the tears are iron within my eyes.
Look, and find life here about my lips—
Who has not loved me? I shall never die."

And not those lips alone. O what mouth will not shape,
Blood wash and spittle moisten, tongue caress

That lie and all man's versions of that lie?
—The facets of the look the lives are mirroring,
The maze where all of us are wandering: that History
Where nothing is not repeated.
Where mistress and Mother fuse at last into a face,
And Time and my father and the terrible finger
Of all I cannot face and must adore—

The Accuser, the Appeaser, the inhuman Judge—
Are Hitler: a separate peace: the real history
Where there is nothing that can cause except my lies,
Where there is nothing that can list except my life,
Where there is nothing. . . . *That* is the world
You must escape from: The America where each
Can think still, "I am innocent."
But there is guilt enough for all: existence is guilt enough.
Because of us, because of what we did or did not do,
See, the men die. "And they are the innocent?"

Irremediably. They? Those innocents whom we forgive
Because their failure is intolerable, the final guilt
Only forgiving hides from us? Forgive today
And the next day fail, and die, and be forgiven?
Forgive, forgive? Forgive no one.
Understand and blame.
"But I am all of them. That face, that world is mine."
Change, then. Learn what you can, love what you can: when they kill you,
Let them look at your face and remember your life
And cry—"You stranger, you damned stranger!"

MERRILL MOORE (B.A.'24, M.D.'28)

I Would Exchange a Portion of a Year

What would you exchange if you could change?
I would exchange a portion of a year
For what is beyond this wall I cannot hear;
I do not need a portion of a distant year.

I've plenty of time, I'm in no hurry
Until a day comes when they wish to bury
Me; then I shall be in a very great hurry,
Frozen in a hurry I cannot stop,
But I shall be stopped, though no one will stop
Hurrying me to bury the stopped me;

We shall come to pause by a small tree,
The one I planted by my father's grave,
And all my hurrying will never save
Me from that meeting by that shrubbery



IN THIS PRESENT TIME THAT WAS ONCE FUTURITY

Before us and behind us there appears
Some wreckage of disseminated years
That are not dreams as mortals usually
Dream, no vista glimpsed beyond the eyes,
But are the hall of time as it appears
Always and continually in arrears
To fate for provender for earthly due;

As it appears to me, as it to you
Appears when helmeted you elevate
Your visor and peer in the face of fate
To see there mirrored in her glassy eyes
The doubt, the truculence and the surprise
Of every man the world has titled wise
From years ago to this futurity.

EN CE MOMENT INOUBLIABLE

The undulating spasm that you are,
The kinetic recurrence that I am,
We both enjoy; and neither gives a damn
About the sodden power and the glory
Of anyone who would rehearse our story;
This is the now, the moment that we hold
Rarer than frankincense, sweeter than myrrh,
Richer than rubies, emerals and fine gold.

We know, we know, that when tomorrow comes,
The parallel, there will be ashes where
Today's fire burns, and there will be black slums
Where now celestial boulevards appear,
The avenues and altars of our hearts;
But who laments the doomed day that departs?

THE SUN AN ORANGE WAS

And now the night that is inevitable
Descends at last through the chilled and misty air
With clouds of smoke and darkness from where
They rose when they were warm. Now they are cold
And bleak and sunless. A moment before they were gold,
As sunset tinged them crimson out of sable;
But now are dark again, and they descend
As is their wont, and will be, time without end.

The orange of today is sucked and squeezed:
The pips were lost as fast as they were teased
Out of their beds, and the juice of this day is gone
To become our flesh and prepare for another one
In the dark night of sleeplessness and sorrow
That must be finished before we are given tomorrow.

BARRICADED AGAINST HIS BRAIN HE STOOD

He was a rock, time was a sea that surged
Over the rock, his particles were urged
To leave him and be swept into the sea
And they did endlessly and ceaselessly;
Yet there is more of him now than there has been.

That was his way, that was not the way of the sea
Or the way of men with time and of time with men.

And so few ever do it over again
Or know they are doing it over, so few men
Ever return to let time wear them down
To a rock covered with barnacles and the brown
Seaweed in sunlight under and out of the water
While tides, obedient as Neptune's daughter,
Fall and rise and fall and rise and fall.

THE CALENDAR BREEDS MORE TIME OUT OF TIME

As victim of the calendar I cry
Against its bean erected in my eye
By silly fortune; I cannot disclose
Its source or where eventually it goes;

There are twelve months, of those we are quite sure,
But what avails their knocking at the door
When each a following regiment and platoon
Solemnly leads as days and very soon
After the months have knocked, the orderly weeks
Approach with regular burdens on their backs!

So it continues to our long despair
Who find us standing halfway up the stair
With days, who, after they with hours wive,
Propagate teeming minutes for the hive.



GEORGE MARION O'DONNELL (B.A.'35, M.A.'38)

Ross in the Garden

Ross waited under the still trees;
Shadow lay dead across his knees.
Europe was half a world away
From that burnt September day,
But fortress, city, armed frontier
Were near as now and close as here;
For all the bright abstract terrain
Was vivified in Ross's brain
And he, the modern Hercules,
Supported Europe on his knees
Where the colored map was spread.

In the still trees above his head,
Crouched upon a lower limb,
A panther lay regarding him;
Piston thigh and razor tooth
Concentrated on his youth.
Between the panther and the map,
Ross waited in a balanced trap.
The panther, watching from the shade,
Tightened for his leap, delayed,
And poised with muscles taut, intent
Upon the passionless descent.

TRYST AT DAWN

Two people stood upon the abrupt hill
In the last grey of dawn. They stood quite still.
He talked; the wind blew high in his gold hair.
One thorn bush scratched the February air.

Crouched in a signal tower below the height,
Waiting for dark to weaken, lurked daylight;
Below the height, beyond the hill of shade
Steel rails converged east toward the ambuscade.

Converging, the rails faded in late night mist;
From the unsteady dark, a train whistle
Loud and quick, loudening; and fast,
Out of the shadow of the hill, went past;

And, as the day pounced on the dark's sleep,
Wind-driven gold hair parodied the leap;
And his mouth parodied the whistle's scream—
The two sounds being one, as in a dream.

THE HOUND THAT HUNTS NO MORE

The hound that hunts no more
Lies with his head close
To the fire; the master, morose,
Stares at the locked door
As if he thought the wood
Might change to flesh and blood.

Outside, the last light
Falls beyond the hedge;
On the slant hill the sedge
Dials the ascending night.
Lighted by grief's flare
The master climbs the stair

Until, at length, he stands
In the lady's room.
As though touching a tomb
He touches the bed with his hands.
Downstairs, the sleeping hound
Leaps over game-rich ground.

JESSE STUART

(GRADUATE SCHOOL, 1931-32)

ELEGY FOR MITCH STUART

I

O clansmen, weep!
Mitch Stuart's dead!
Old age took him
At home in bed.
No Van Horn put
A bullet through
Mitch Stuart's head.

One war was not enough for him.
He gathered in his clan;
And warring in the black-oak hills,
They fought it man to man.
And old gin-drinking Mitch-
He thinned the Van Horn clan.

II

When old Mitch Stuart
Heard the brass band
On a parade day
Play "Dixie Land,"

On his lame leg
And hickory cane,
He would step out
And march again.

His nineteen children
Dared not to bother

On parade day
Their marching father.

His hickory cane,
His clumsy feet;
Would pop on
The home town street.

But not again
His hickory cane
And clumsy feet
Will pop pop on
The home town street.

III

O thunder, pound your drums!
Pound, pound your drums! your big bass drums!
For old Mitch Stuart comes—
His ox cart comes.

O lightning, cut the sky!
Old Mitch is coming here to lie.

O oxen, roll your wheels!
O roll your wheels—your muddy wheels!
Under the rain's white spikes of steel.
They haul old Mitch.

IV

For him they pray
No lofty prayer;
The little crowd
Gathered there . . .
For him they sing

No songs of folly,
But by his grave
Six soldiers kneel
And over it fire
A farewell volley.

V

Over a chestnut top
Flies the wood crane.
The chestnut roots have grooved
His mortal brain.

Blue dreamer with ears deaf
To falling rain;
Blue dreamer with eyes blurred
To flying crane,

Do you dream you will rise again?

Blackberry briars are white with bloom
Where old Mitch Stuart lies;
Jar-flies are singing at his tomb
Under the Blaine Creek skies.

VI

If on his slab were carved
Something beside his name
And dates and regiment,
I know old Mitch would want
His epitaph to be:

Here lies old Mitch Stuart
With a bottle and a gun;
He's a-drinking and a-fighting
He's got 'em on the run.

His feet are to the east,
His head is to the west—
No Van Horn's left to hit
The heart in his clay breast.

Old Mitch's a-fighting still,
He's got 'em on the run—
One hand is on his bottle,
The other on his gun.



W. R. MOSES (B.A.'32, M.A.'33, Ph.D.'39)

Angina Pectoris

The steady heart, which in its steadiness
Allows formation of the somewhat, life,
Unsteadies, stops, and so a thick debris
Drops to the sidewalk, where the poor limbs sprawl
Like things a child had made of mud, and all
The color leaves the face, pale as a knife.

When the man walked down the street in his mackinaw,
Or sat in a barroom gurgling at his beer,
It was only a small usuper of oxygen
I noticed; I'd have seen him ship for Spain,
Or go to Dakota and die working with grain,
And never thought, or been glad he was not here.

But now that I see him neutral earth, to bury
In earth, for damp, or a pale, poetic swarm
Of worms to end, I'm sorry; I wish him what
I'd not wish other mud: that he ate tonight
With children he loved, that the meal was heavy and right
That he slept with plenty of quilts to keep him warm.

THE ILLOGIC OF THE HEART

Taken where crisp thin leaves and vacant stubble
And short blue days encouraged generously
The old lust and nostalgia of autumn,
The deep, red heart renewed, and fluttered high,

Until, as called in kind by animal beating,
Brown wings pumped upward from the covert's breast,
Where birds, like rushing hearts no more pedestrian,
Vitaled the air; and then the mechanist

Tubes emptied; hearts lay dead in the year's dying
To make the red heart throb as though increased
By all the surge from the land-born hearts wrested
—Strange red, ecstatic more, that the brown had ceased.

SAVILLE CLARK (B.A.'25)

An Alchemist Hebrew

An alchemist Hebrew
Turned seven firkins water into wine,
And all the villagers
Said it was fine.

Wine is stuff to drink,
But his land goes dry
Since they buried the last cavalier
With gold eagles on each eye.

It's hard to get a drink
After city curfew,
And the chemist says that alchemy is all wrong
In spite of plain statements by Saint Matthew.

Quae cum ita sint
Don't violate the cavalier's town
By drinking water in it.
Go east where oceans of water are
And drown.

EMPEROR'S MEN

Two thousand miles of western water
To the east now wed
In holy science of the circle
And moving slow, Diamond Head
Reveals Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Waikiki.

Oahu, where waterfalls are dropped
Like silver lines from slow green mountains,
Once held a sudden one that stopped
For lack of water.

Brown, fearful men ran spearless
Up the steep valley,
Before Kamehameha's storm,
And over abrupt Pali
In torrent plunged.

Prince of Hawaii,
Kamehameha won the land
And on it is rested now.
Him I understand.

But we are those who fought by water
And won a salty crown,
An empty wave where cruisers were,
Grey cruisers settling down,
And the questing deaths of foreign men;
Not men that questing die.
We are shallow buried here
And do not resting lie.

BEDFORD FORREST

At Memphis on the bluff
Above the Mississippi,
Is a statue wrought in bronze
Not quite so hard and rough
As the flesh it remembers.

Wizard of the Empire Invisible,
Wizard of the rapid saddle,
Bedford Forrest, in stiff Decembers
And gallant Junes sits to stare
At Donelson and Henry.

"Let's give 'em a dare,
Boys."

While Bragg and Joe Johnston, Longstreet,
And yet the magnificent Lee,
Bowed this way and that,
Were feared to break the rules,
Offend the referee:
While the splendid swordsmen fenced
He fought, not on the pretty map
Moving up battalions of butternut pins
On hostile lines and blue dispositions;

But like the thunderous clap
Of thunder on the lightning stroke,
Bedford Forrest, gigantic him,
Caught his companies in his hand
And hurled them at the enemy-folk.

JESSE WILLS (B.A.'22)

To a Tired Clerk

Do not despair, though you are clipped with chains
Of petty drudging, clangor and grime will heal.
In loneliness your city's bones of steel.
Will rust, green-tendoned; only the cool rains
Will whisper down old thunder-roads of trains;
And centuries long as today Ninevah counts
Will fret the marbles of old soda-founts
With sands which now are hotel windowpanes.

It yet may be, when glittering frost has thinned
The leaves that hide, by westering yellow fires
Nomads, bronze-armed, shall note where mystery carves
Your firm's worn name, and dread their wizard sires,
Curbing their foam-necked horses, while their scarves
And ruddy hair are strung upon the wind.

PRIMAVERA

Our lady of the clatter keys,
Your fingers flash on steel today
As though they woke from ivories
A softer cadence than you play.

The minutes chip upon the hours,
But you type on unweariedly,
Or pour fresh water on your flowers,
Humming a tune time dances by.

In terse dictations of the trade
Black letters fall like soot on snow;
Your eyes are brown pools in a glade
Where glinting visions weave and go.

Of rumored spring we see that line
Deep blue above the cliffs of stone;
The sparrows chirp in the sunshine,
The sparrows chirp and pigeons moan.

And you rejoice. That cloudy blue
Is webbed and clouded in your dress;
Our granite spring is green to you
And you translate its loveliness.

You laugh beneath the mazda suns;
Your voice is like a windy bell;
In a white dance each finger runs
A naiad on the stairs of hell.

ALEC BROCK STEVENSON (B.A.'16)

Icarus in November

Icare est chut ici, le jeune audacieux.
—Philippe Desportes (1546-1606)

There is a moment blind with light, split by the hum
  Of something struck and shaken otherwhere,
And of breath's pausing stills the heartbeat and the dumb
  Wet trees clutch every leaf, then on the air
Will blow slow, small, and keen, and faster, greater, higher,
  The hissing whoop of wind through timeless wings
A thuttering drum-beat round a cold immortal fire
  Half-muffling such a mortal cry as brings
  Fear to the lonely soul's imaginings,
A crescent wailing, and the little heart inclined
Hears Icarus, and how the chill gale moans behind.

Who said, O Sun, to Icarus that he must fly.
  Or fall who dropped on this green wave at last?
Who fed him bitter aether from the tenuous sky
  Whirled in his winged mind all that is, past
And pointed four directions to his stumbling soul?
  Quibbled the whence how where when who and what
Till golden antlers blossomed and the Tree was whole
  And Dian poised, and Icarus forgot
  What Icarus had been, and what had not,
And searching lost the hope that Icarus designed
And seeing, never saw that Icarus was blind?

O Icarus is fallen, alabaster foam
  Hangs stilly, still, *Icare est chut ici.*
White tangent to the green wave's arc he's shotten home
  Man-bird, sky-arrow to the unriddling sea,

Who was so questing, still unsated, lost to act,
  Quartered the zigzag sky for beauty's use,
Swooped, soared, sailed, wheeled and turned and sudden
    stopped on fact
  Or use's beauty or the keen mind's loose
  Hot ions streaming in a fluent sluice,
Heedless that Icarus must fall against the wind
Echoing, ever falling in the hollow mind.

Sun of my night, lamp of my not uncertain void,
  Here Icarus is fallen, here he lies.
O fallen Icarus, whose fleshly eyes alloyed
  The fire and solar gold and still are eyes,
Give me some manner back the brain, the hardiness—
  If Icarus is fallen once he flew;
Hard-taloned on the sunward wrist he scorned the jess
  Pressed on his quarry in aethereal blue.
Icare est chut ici, and still he knew—
Less where the heron went than what he hoped to find
And more the cloven hoof-print than the frightened hind.

TO A WISE MAN

He gave me much of wisdom; he was wise;
So that my backward-looking eyes are dim
And question blank and unillumined skies
Asking how best I shall remember him:

Not as with those kind arms in stillness folded
And not with gray hairs fashioned into rest,
Pale forehead, lips by no dear smiling molded,
And eyes withdrawn from glories in the west.

Then I must think of logging roads and rain,
And thrushes dripping song like silver foam,
The slight fern's rooted feathers, and again
Across the lake the golden lamps of home:

The rustling path, the lonely woodland clover,
The stream, and his brown hand to help me over!

STANLEY JOHNSON (B.S.'16, M.A.'23)

An Intellectual's Funeral

On such a day we put him in a box
And carried him to that last house, the grave;
All round the people walked upon the streets
Without once thinking that he had gone.
Their hard heels clacked upon the pavement stones.

A voiceless change had muted all his thoughts
To a deep significance we could not know;
And yet we knew that he knew all at last.
We heard with grave wonder the falling clods,
And with grave wonder met the loud day.

The night would come and day, but we had died.
With new green sod the melancholy gate
Was closed and locked, and we went pitiful,
Our clacking heels upon the pavement stones
Did knock and knock for Death to let us in.

WILLIAM WALLACE DAVIDSON (B.A.'29, M.A.'33)

Prodigal

The firelight shadows flickered on the wall
As he lay there waiting. They'll never know,
He thought, watching the shadows jump and fall,
That I have been where they can never go.
He heard them in the next room talking, talking,
Not understanding, jumping at conclusions
Like the shadows on the wall. That walking
Up and down was brother, hating confusions;
That low determined sound was father, grim
And firm. In spite of mother's gentle plea
He knew that it was going hard with him
Tomorrow. Tonight there was the oddity
Of sleeplessness, strange shadows on the wall,
Sweet memory, and noises in the hall.

SUMMER DAY: A CRISIS

Was it some forgotten rifle's crack
On cushioned hills that afternoon
That left us drifting back
Like smoke idly from the swift death?
Was phantom smoke a poisoned breath,
While stealing through the sunny day
Usurped the cedar's joyous tip
Where late the mocking-bird had sway?
Did some one plant the dragon's tooth
To wrench the gracious soil of truth
With these so brutal pikes of anger?
The telegraphic balked desire
Distends the flying word to stranger
Fully armed and fraught with danger.
Silence the potential liar
Stiffens first to barb and wire,
Then bursts into the cannon's roar
Which thunders: peace shall be no more.
Peace that could not end is war,
The tangled elemental strife
Shot from the rugged depths of life.

EDWARD McGEHEE (B.A.'41, M.A.'42)

Ancestral Theme

"Call no man happy until he is dead."—Solon

1. The cool tinkle of bells on a longer April evening
One speck of star seen through the last eye of night
The morning fastness with opaque veins of a new grape leaf,
And all the space between, the vague before the mountainous after,
For in seven days, he said, washed fronds for a Sunday of Psalms
A long lived custom in Assisi, in Staines, and in Richmond
With the single word of passion edging between lush
Cavernous walls, as a child's red pin wheel
Cuts a bleeding, flowing groove when he chases air along the street.
That word again, the turmoil of its meaning—
Submission of a silent will, justification of a general surge.
A question high vowels do not seem to answer.

2. A sharper cut, boring a hole to find the caveman's drawings,
With only this answer: the few words told about Uncle Nathan,
And Uncle Ben, who could play his violin like no one else;
For a child of seventy years after they were romantic.
After sorghum and spoonbread with an early fire,
The stories of Job, the surrounding false army, Samson's hair,
Those years when the eyes would close against the hard seat,
Gave time for the hates and loves and codes to be read
Through long whiskers, slowly when diphtheria struck the house
Or reverently through a Calvin Passiontide, a Christmas Eve,
Their names alone show this—the slow coolness of a generation's bake.

3. The recurrent theme—of Nathan riding in town and countries
Through broken farm sites and a former grove, bringing the latest
News. Courier for Beauregard, and he had what Aristotle called
A good horse, but more like a wind worn carving
Or the horse fighting for the upper frieze
With wings outspread, the rider's breastplate carved with miracles;
Still able to ask the way or remember his dreams as a child,
He did not depend on two stars for a celestial plotted path—
One morning the sky would be a void, frozen icicles of a flood;
For Nathan with sword, polished buttons, and bridle—calloused
hands,
Albion Castle at a hundred miles was days away,
And, like the years, carried in telling, a glory,
A back-to-the-fire warmth. Can the word of passion
In a dream destroy all that—the grove losing its notches
And polished sides, or perhaps too firm for an opening?

4. Nathan, who lived to be older, yet remembered as courier,
Courier for Beauregard, an echo over the low ground,
With Nell shot in the rump fording the creek;
Can Nathan be seen coming this way?
Not a passionate ending—consumption brought on
With the winter miles of wandering wingless and horseless—
The last days spent in the four poster bed,
Buried in the family plot of a farm no longer known,
A field for rich long leaf tobacco, shouts of children
Building castles and horses under the apple trees;
All passion for love or seeing again
The midnight dark covered bird is lost in running cedar.

CHARLES R. PORTER (Class of 1944)

We Were an Amoeba

We were England and Europe, one continent,
then in that time. The paleolithic steams
baked our joined land,
heedless we grew our forests. But aluminum
lightning rumbled, soldiers of water
marched, a tugboat of wind
towed me out and left me England,
floating in the ocean,
floating in the tears from my river tear-sacs,
sending out peninsulas to grasp for you and never reach your shore.

We were an amoeba,
sucking life into our protoplasm
through our wall that could not see or smell,
whirring like a propeller
through the slime of the green ink,
conscious only of ourself. And then an elemental
force arose, to which we were insensible.
Powerless our nucleus became
two nuclei; we ate our life apart.

We were a starfish blinded to our ugliness
till a rock
fell and cut our body.
You grew my parts which were not my parts,
I grew your parts which were not your parts.

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Richmond Croom Beatty

Dr. Beatty is an Alabamian. Born in 1905, he attended Birmingham-Southern College and was a Vanderbilt graduate student, 1927-30, receiving his Ph.D. the latter year. He has edited several books, written biographies of William Byrd, Bayard Taylor, Lord Macaulay, and James Russell Lowell, and has been, since 1937, a member of the Vanderbilt English Department.

Jack H. Boone

Mr. Boone was born in 1908 in Clinton, South Carolina. He received his B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1930; his M.A. the following year. He is the author of a number of short stories and of the novel, *Dossie Bell Is Dead.* At present he is a member of the English Department at the Georgia School of Technology.

Cleanth Brooks, Jr.

Mr. Brooks was born in Kentucky in 1906 but was reared in Tennessee. He attended Vanderbilt, 1924-28, receiving his B.A. the latter year. After graduation as M.A. from Tulane in 1929, he was for three years a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. In addition to editing several revolutionary textbooks with Robert Penn Warren, Mr. Brooks is the author of *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* and of a highly valuable study in linguistics, *The Relation of the Alabama-Georgia Dialect to the Provincial Dialects of Great Britain.* He is at present a professor of English at Louisiana State University.

Brainard Cheney

Mr. Cheney was born in Fitzgerald, Georgia, in 1900, and spent his boyhood in Lumber City. He attended college at the Citadel, the University of Georgia, and Vanderbilt. During the years 1925-42 he was a political commentator for the Nashville *Banner.* Long a widely known resident of the Vanderbilt Campus, Mr. Cheney is the author of the Houghton-Mifflin Prize novel *Lightwood* and of *River Rogue.* He is at present secretary to United States Senator Tom Stewart, of Tennessee.

Saville Trice Clark

Lt. Colonel Clark, U. S. M. C., was born at Verona, Mississippi, in 1904. He was graduated from Vanderbilt in 1925. Two years later he enlisted as

a private in the Marine Corps, and rose from the ranks to his present status. He has published verses in the *American Caravan* (1928), *Poetry,* and the *Sewanee Review.*

DONALD DAVIDSON

Mr. Davidson was born in Campbellsville, Tennessee, in 1893. He received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Vanderbilt. Since 1920 he has been a member of the English department. Mr. Davidson is widely known both as poet and critic. His books include *An Outland Piper* (1924), *The Tall Men* (1927), *Attack on Leviathan* (1938), and *Lee in the Mountains and Other Poems* (1939). He is presently completing a volume on the Tennessee for the Rivers of America Series.

WILLIAM W. DAVIDSON

Mr. Davidson—a brother of Donald Davidson—is a native of Lynnville, Giles County, Tennessee. He was graduated B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1929 and M.A. four years later. At present he is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Georgia.

MILDRED HAUN

Miss Haun is a native of Cocke County, Tennessee. She was graduated B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1935, M.A. in 1937, and returned later as a Fellow in Creative Writing. She is the author of *The Hawk's Done Gone* and of a number of short stories.

GEORGE PULLEN JACKSON

Dr. Jackson is a native of Monson, Maine. After studying for one year at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Dresden, he entered Vanderbilt, but took his degrees from the University of Chicago. He came to Vanderbilt in 1918 as chairman of the German department, a position which he retained until his retirement in 1943.

Widely recognized as an authority in folk music, he founded the Nashville Choral Society, the Old Harp Singers of Nashville, a concert giving group, and has been consistently active in this field. His books include: *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (1933); *Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America* (1937), *Down East Spirituals and Others* (1942), and *White and Negro Spirituals, Their Life Span and Kinship* (1944).

RANDALL JARRELL

Mr. Jarrell is a native of Nashville. He received his B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1935 and his M.A. three years later. He is the author of a volume of poems, *Blood for a Stranger* (1942), was one of the authors included in

Five Young American Poets, and he has written a number of valuable critical articles. Before entering the Army Air Forces he was a member of the English department of the University of Texas.

STANLEY JOHNSON

Mr. Johnson is a native of Nashville. He was graduated from Vanderbilt —B.S. in 1916 and M.A. in 1923. One of the original Fugitives, he is also the author of a novel, *Professor,* and of a grade school history of Tennessee. At present he is publicity director at the University of Tennessee.

ANDREW NELSON LYTLE

Mr. Lytle was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in 1902. He received his B.A. degree from Vanderbilt in 1925 and studied later in the School of the Drama at Yale. His books include a biography, *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company,* and two novels, *The Long Night* and *At the Moons Inn.* He is at present farming at Portland, Tennessee.

ETHEL MOORE

Miss Moore is a native of Chicago, but was reared in Culleoka, Tennessee. She was graduated B.A. from Vanderbilt in December, 1943.

MERRILL MOORE

Dr. Merrill Moore was born in Columbia, Tennessee, in 1903, the son of the Tennessee novelist, John Trotwood Moore. One of the Fugitive group, he was graduated B.A. in 1924 and M.D. in 1928. He has written a fabulous number of sonnets—some estimates run as high as 50,000—and a number of them have been published in book form under the titles *The Noise That Time Makes, Six Sides to a Man,* and *M Sonnets.* Professionally, Dr. Moore was serving as Psychiatrist at the Washingtonian Hospital, Boston, and lecturing at the Harvard Medical School before he was commissioned a Major in the Army Medical Corps. He is now in the South Pacific Area.

W. R. MOSES

Dr. Moses was born in Alexandria, Minnesota, in 1911. All his degrees are from Vanderbilt. He was graduated B.A. in 1932, M.A. the following year, and Ph.D., 1939. A number of his poems were printed in *Five Young American Poets* (1942). At present he is a Lieutenant (j. g.) in the Navy.

EDWARD MCGEHEE

Mr. McGehee was born in La Fayette, Alabama, in 1919. He was graduated from Vanderbilt—B.A. in 1941, and M.A. in 1942. Immediately after-

wards he entered the Armed Forces. He is now a Sergeant with the A. E. F. in the Middle East.

H. CLARENCE NIXON

Born near Jacksonville, Alabama, Dr. Nixon received degrees from Auburn and the University of Chicago. He served in the Army in France, 1918, and with the American Peace Commission, Paris, 1919. He taught History and Political Science at Vanderbilt, 1925-28, and married Anne Trice (Vanderbilt, '26), in 1927. After teaching at Tulane and the University of Missouri, he has been on a second tenure at Vanderbilt since 1940. He contributed to *I'll Take My Stand* and *Culture in the South,* and is the author of *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (1938) and *Possum Trot* (1941).

GEORGE MARION O'DONNELL

Mr. O'Donnell was born at Midnight Plantation, Mississippi, in 1914. He was graduated B.A. and M.A. from Vanderbilt and was a Fellow in Creative Writing during the year 1939-40. Since this date he has taught at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, in Auburn. Mr. O'Donnell's work has appeared in numerous critical and literary magazines, in *Who Owns America,* and in *Five Young American Poets.*

FRANK LAWRENCE OWSLEY

Dr. Owsley was born in McGehee, Montgomery County, Alabama, in 1890. He is a graduate of Auburn and of the University of Chicago. Nationally known as an authority in Southern history, he is the author of *States Rights in the Confederacy* (1925), *King Cotton Diplomacy* (1931), and of numerous critical and scholarly articles. He has been a professor of history at Vanderbilt since 1920.

EDD WINFIELD PARKS

Dr. Parks was born in Newbern, Tennessee, in 1906. He is a graduate of Harvard and of Vanderbilt (Ph.D., 1933). Before entering the armed services—he is presently a Lieutenant in the Signal Corps—he published a collection of essays, *Segments of Southern Thought,* a biography, *Charles Egbert Craddock,* and a novel, *Big Foot Spencer.* Dr. Parks has also edited several valuable textbooks and is the author of numerous critical articles. He is on leave of absence from the English department of the University of Georgia.

CHARLES R. PORTER

Mr. Porter is a native of Nashville. He enrolled at Vanderbilt in 1940 and was in residence for three years before entering the Armed Forces. At present he is a Meterology cadet at the University of Wisconsin.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

Mr. Ransom was born in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1888. He received his B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1909 and was later a Rhodes Scholar. His writings have been extensive. Beginning with *Poems About God* (1919), they include *Chills and Fever* and *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* (also poetry). Among his prose works are *God Without Thunder, The World's Body, The New Criticism,* and numerous essays. Mr. Ransom removed to Kenyon College in 1937. Since that date, in addition to his duties as a professor, he has edited the *Kenyon Review.* He was a member of the English department at Vanderbilt for twenty-two years.

WALTER SNELL

Born November 12, 1920, in Soochow, China, the son of American missionaries, Mr. Snell was graduated B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1942. He is now an Ensign on active duty with a destroyer in the Pacific Area.

ALEC B. STEVENSON

Mr. Stevenson was born in Toronto, Canada, in 1895. When he was six weeks old he was brought to Nashville, where his father, the late James Henry Stevenson, occupied the Chair of Semitic Languages in the years 1893-1919. Mr. Stevenson was graduated B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1916. One of the original Fugitives, he is now Vice-President and Trust Officer and a Director of the American National Bank, in Nashville.

JAMES A. STILL

A native of Fairfax, Alabama, Mr. Still received his M.A. from Vanderbilt in 1930. The author of the frequently reprinted volume of short stories, *On Troublesome Creek,* he is now a Sergeant with the A. E. F. in the Middle East.

JESSE STUART

Mr. Stuart was born in the settlement of W-Hollow, near Riverton, Kentucky, in 1907. He attended Lincoln University and, as a graduate student, spent a year at Vanderbilt, where he wrote his first book *Beyond Dark Hills,* as an autobiographical assignment under Dr. Mims. He is also the author of several other volumes of short stories and poems. His most recent novel, *Taps for Private Tussie,* was a Book-of-the-Month-Club selection for December, 1943.

WALTER L. SULLIVAN

A native of Nashville, Mr. Sullivan is a member of the class of 1945. He is at present a Sergeant in the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve.

ALLEN TATE

Mr. Tate was born in Kentucky, in 1899. He was graduated B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1922, and has taught at various institutions—Southwestern University, Memphis; the Womans College of North Carolina, and at Princeton. He will edit the *Sewanee Review* beginning the summer of 1944.

Mr. Tate is one of the most widely known and esteemed authors in the field of modern literature, having distinguished himself as biographer, poet, critic, and novelist. Pre-eminently a man of letters, his achievements are too extensive to be listed here, but they include biographies of Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson, a collection of essays, *Reason in Madness,* a novel, *The Fathers,* and several volumes of poetry, including *Selected Poems* (1939).

PETER TAYLOR

Hillman Peter Taylor was born in Memphis, Tennessee, January 8, 1917. He entered Vanderbilt in 1936, but transferred to Kenyon College when Mr. Ransom left the University, and was graduated B.A. in 1940. He is at present a Sergeant in the Army.

JOE THOMPSON, JR.

Mr. Thompson was born in 1919, in Nashville. He was graduated A.B. from Vanderbilt in 1941 and is now a Captain with the U. S. Army Air Forces in England.

JOHN DONALD WADE

Dr. Wade was born in Marshallville, Georgia, in 1892. He is a graduate of the University of Georgia, of Harvard, and of Columbia. He was a Professor of American Literature at Vanderbilt during the years 1928-34, and inaugurated graduate studies in this field. At present he is Chairman of the Humanities Division at the University of Georgia.

Dr. Wade's two biographies, *James Augustus Longstreet* and *John Wesley,* have proved of primary importance. He is also known as the author of a number of discriminating critical essays.

ROBERT PENN WARREN

Mr. Warren was born in Guthrie, Kentucky, in 1905. He was graduated from Vanderbilt twenty years later, and after advanced study at the University of California and at Yale, he spent two years at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. With Cleanth Brooks he edited the *Southern Review* during the period 1935-42. He is at present a professor of English at the University of Minnesota.

Mr. Warren is one of the most versatile and accomplished of Vanderbilt's writers. He is nationally known as biographer, poet, critic, and novelist. His *Selected Poems* were published in April, 1944.

JESSE E. WILLS

A native of Nashville and a member of the Fugitive group, Mr. Wills was graduated A.B. from Vanderbilt in 1922. He is Vice-President and Manager of the Ordinary Department of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company of Nashville.

CECIL WOODS

A native of Shelbyville, Tennessee, Mr. Woods was graduated A.B. from Vanderbilt in 1942. He is now a Sergeant in the U. S. Army Air Forces.



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